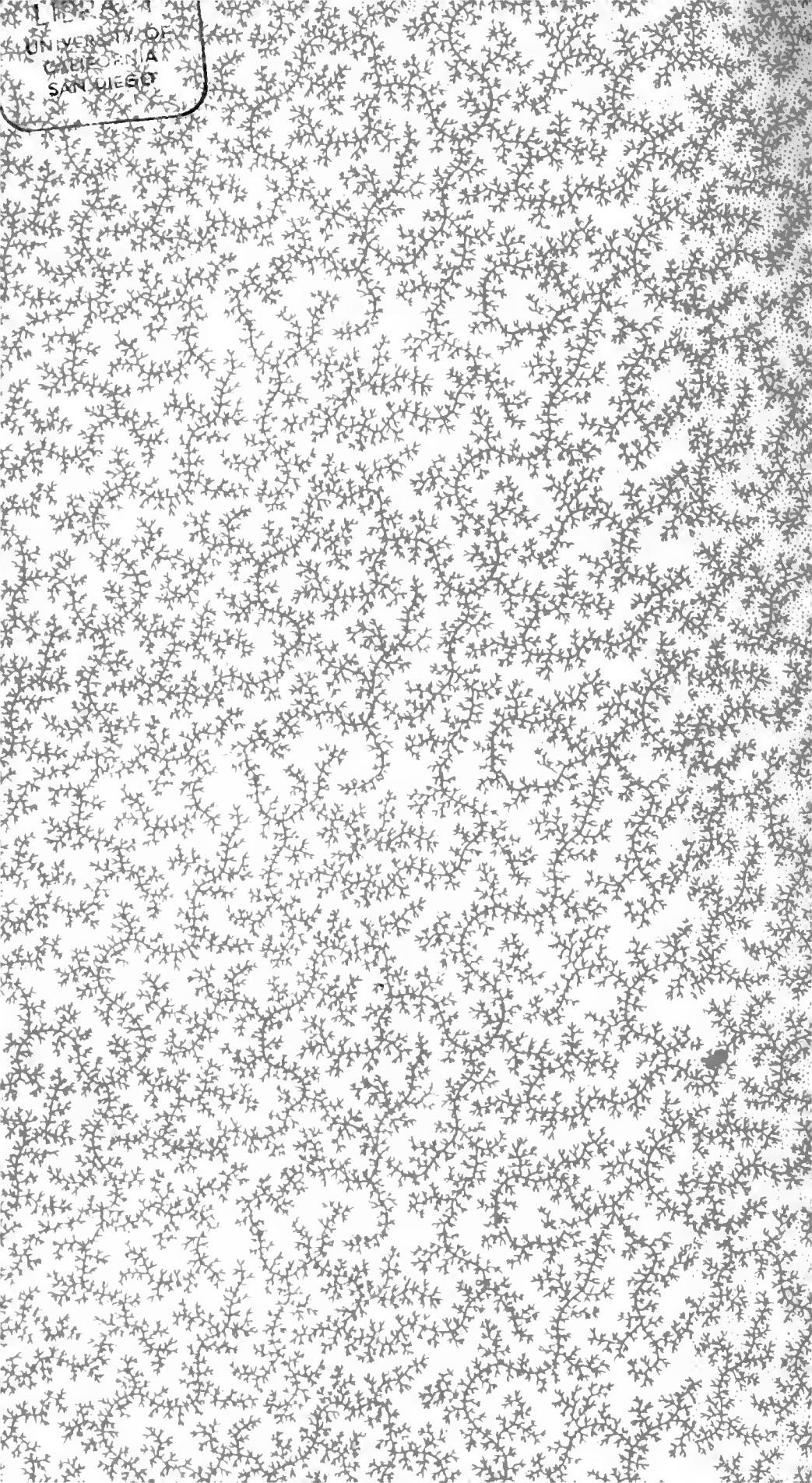
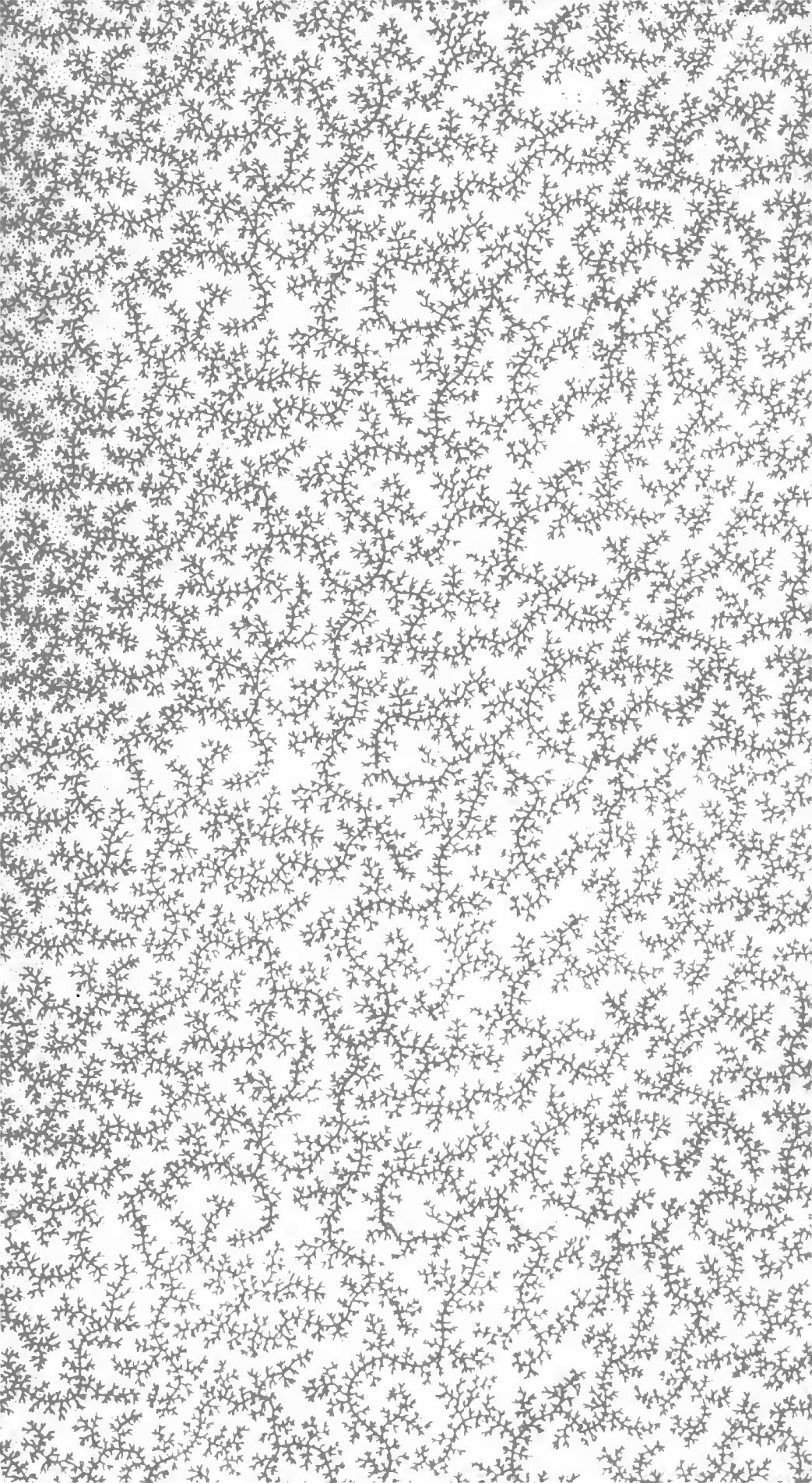


ARCOLON OF GAVLA

MADISON J. GAYLIN

UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA
SAN DIEGO





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BLOOMS OF THE BERRY.

THE
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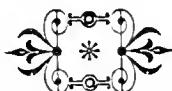
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RECOLON OF GRUL

WITH

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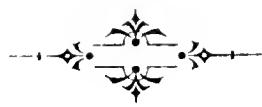
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LOUISVILLE.
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1889

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With all my Heart
to
LILIAN AND ROSE.



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ACCOLON OF GAUL.

With triumphs gay of old romance.—KEATS.

PRELUDE.

WHY, dreams from dreams in dreams remembered !
naught
Save this, alas ! that once it seemed I thought
I wandered dim with someone, but I knew
Not who ; most beautiful and good and true,
Yet sad through suffering ; with curl-crowned brow,
Soft eyes and voice ; so white she haunts me now :—
And when, and where ?—At night in dreamland.

She

Led me athwart a flower-showered lea.
Where trammeled puckered pansy and the pea ;
Spread stains of pale-red poppies rinced of rain,
So gorged with sun their hurt hearts ached with pain ;
Heaped honeysuckles ; roses lavishing beams,
Wherein I knew were huddled little dreams
Which laughed coy, hidden merriment and there
Blew quick gay kisses fragrancing the air.

And where a river bubbled through the sward
A mist lay sleepily ; and it was hard
To see whence sprung it, to what seas it led,
How broadly spread and what it was it fled
So ceasless in its sighs, and bickering on
Into romance or some bewildering dawn
Of wisest legend from the storied wells
Of lost Baranton, where old Merlin dwells,
Nodding a white poll and a grand, gray beard
As if some Lake Ladyé he, listening, heard,
Who spake like water, danced like careful showers
With blown gold curls thro' drifts of wild-thorn flowers ;
Loose, lazy arms in graceful movement tossed,
Float flower-like down a woodland vista, lost
In some peculiar note that wrings a tear
Slow down his withered cheek. And then steals near
Her sweet, lascivious brow's white wonderment,
And gray rude eyes, and hair which hath the scent
Of the wildwood Brécéliand's perfumes
In Brittany ; and in it one red bloom's
Blood-drop thrust deep, and so "Sweet Viviane!"
All the glad leaves lisp like a young, soft rain
From top to top, until a running surge
The dark, witch-haunted solitude will urge,
That shakes and sounds and stammers as from sleep
Some giant were aroused : and with a leap

A samite-gauzy creature, glossy white,
Showers mocking kisses fast and, like a light
Beat by a gust to flutter and then done,
From Brécéliande and Merlin she is gone.
But still he sits there drowsing with his dreams ;
A wondrous cohort hath he ; many as gleams
That stab the moted mazes of a beech ;
And each grave dream hath its own magic speech
To sting to tears his old eyes heavy—two
Hang, tangled brilliants, in his beard like dew :
And still faint murmurs of courts brave and fair,
And forms of Arthur and proud Guenevere,
Grave Tristram and rare Isoud and stout Mark,
Bold Launcelot, chaste Galahad the dark
Of his weak mind, once strong, glares up with, then,
—The instant's fostered blossoms— die again.
A roar of tournament, a rippling stir
Of silken lists that ramble into her,
That white witch-mothered beauty, Viviane,
The vast Brécéliande and dreams again.
Then Dagonet, King Arthur's fool, trips there,
A waggish cunning ; glittering on his hair
A tinsel crown ; and then will slightly sway
Thick leaves and part, and there Morgane the Fay
With haughty wicked eyes and lovely face
Studies him steady for a little space.

I.

“**T**HOU askest with thy studious eyes again,
Here where the restless forest hears the main
Toss in a troubled sleep and moan. Ah, sweet,
With joy and passion the kind hour's replete;
And what wild beauty here! where roughly run
Huge forest shadows from the westering sun,
The wood's a subdued power gentle as
Yon tame wild-things, that in the moss and grass
Gaze with their human eyes. Here grow the lines
Of pale-starred green; and where yon fountain shines
Urn'd in its tremulous ferns, rest we upon
This oak-trunk of God's thunder overthrown
Years, years agone; not where 'tis rotted brown
But where the thick bark's firm and overgrown
Of clambering ivy blackly berried; where
Wild musk of wood decay just tincts the air,
As if some strange shrub on some whispering way,
In some dewed dell, while dreaming of one May,
In longing languor weakly tried to wake
One sometime blossom and could only make
Ghosts of such dead aromas as it knew,
And shape a specter, budding thin as dew,
To haunt these sounding miles of solitude.

Troubled thou askest, Morgane, and the mood,
Unfathomed in thine eyes, glows rash and deep
As that in some wild-woman's found on sleep
By some lost knight upon a precipice,
Whom he hath wakened with a laughing kiss.
As that of some frail, elfin lady white
As if of watery moonbeams, filmy dight,
Who waves diaphanous beauty on some cliff
That drowsing purrs with moon-drenched pines; but if
The lone knight follow, foul fiends rise and drag
Him crashing down, while she, tall on the crag,
Triumphant mocks him with glad sorcery
Till all the wildwood echoes shout with glee.
As that bewildering mystery of a tarn,
Some mountain water, which the mornings scorn
To anadem with fire and leave gray;
To which some champion cometh when the Day
Hath tired of breeding on his proud, young head
Flame-furry blooms and, golden chapletéd,
Sits rosy, trembling with full love for Night,
Who cometh sandaled; dark in crape; the light
Of her good eyes a marvel; her vast hair
Tortuous with stars,— as in some shadowy lair
The eyes of hunted wild things burn with rage,—
And on large bosoms doth his love assuage.

“ He, coming thither in that haunted place,
Stoops low to quaff cool waters, when his face
Meets gurgling fairy faces in a ring
That jostle upward babbling ; beckoning
Him deep to wonders secret built of old
By some dim witch : ‘ A city walled with gold,
With beryl battlements and paved with pearls,
Slim, lambent towers wrought of foamy swirls
Of alabaster, and that witch to love,
More beautiful to love than queens above.’—
He pauses troubled, but a wizard power,
In all his bronzen harness that mad hour
Plunges him—whither? what if he should miss
Those cloudy beauties and that creature’s kiss?
Ah, Morgane, that same power Accolon
Saw potent in thine eyes and it hath drawn
Him deep to plunge—and to what breathless fate?—
Bliss?—which, too true, he hath well quaffed of late!
But, there!—may come what stealthy-footed Death
With bony claws to clutch away his breath!
And make him loveless to those eyes, alas!—
Fain must I speak that vision ; thus it was :

“ In sleep one plucked me some warm fleurs-de-lis,
Larger than those of earth ; and I might see
Their woolly gold, loose, webby woven thro’,—

Like fluffy flames spun,—gauzy with fine dew.
And ‘asphodels !’ I murmured ; then, ‘these sure
The Eden amaranths, so angel pure
That these alone may pluck them ; aye and aye !
But with that giving, lo, she passed away
Beyond me on some misty, yearning brook
With some sweet song, which all the wild air took
With torn farewells and pensive melody
Touching to tears, strange, hopeless utterly.
So merciless sweet that I yearned high to tear
Those ingot-cored and gold-crowned lilies fair ;
Yet over me a horror which restrained
With melancholy presence of two pained
And awful, mighty eyes that cowed and held
Me weeping while that sad dirge died or swelled
Far, far on endless waters borne away :
A wild bird’s musick smitten when the ray
Of dawn it burned for graced its drooping head,
And the pale glory strengthened round it dead ;
Daggered of thorns it plunged on, blind in night,
The slow blood ruby on its plumage white.

“ Then, then I knew these blooms which she had given
Were strays of parting grief and waifs of Heaven
For tears and memories ; too delicate
For eyes of earth such souls immaculate !

But then—my God ! my God ! thus these were left !
 I knew then still ! but of that song bereft—
 That rapturous wonder grasping after grief—
 Beyond all thought—weak thought that would be thief.”
 And bowed and wept into his hands and she
 Sorrowful beheld ; and resting at her knee
 Raised slow her oblong lute and smote its chords ;
 But ere the impulse saddened into words
 Said : “ And didst love me as thy lips have spake
 No visions wrought of sleep might such love shake.
 Fast is all Love in fastness of his power,
 With flame reverberant moated stands his tower ;
 Not so built as to chink from fact a beam
 Of doubt and much less of a doubt from dream ;
Such, the alchemic fires of Love’s desires,
 Which hug this like a snake, melt to gold wires
 To chord the old lyre new whereon he lyres.”
 So ceased and then, sad softness in her eye
 Sang to his dream a questioning reply :

“ Will love grow less when dead the roguish Spring,
 Who from gay eyes sowed violets whispering ;
 Peach petals in wild cheeks, wan-wasted thro’
 Of withering grief, laid lovely ’neath the dew,
 Will love grow less ?

“ Will love grow less when comes queen Summer tall,
 Her throat a lily long and spiritual ;
 Rich as the poppied swaths—droned haunts of bees—
 Her cheeks, a brown maid’s gleaning on the leas,
 Will love grow less ?

“ Will love grow less when Autumn sighing there
 Broods with long frost streaks in her dark, dark hair ;
 Tears in grave eyes as in grave heavens above,
 Deep lost in memories’ melancholy, love,
 Will love grow less ?

“ Will love grow less when Winter at the door
 Begs on her scant locks icicles as hoar ;
 While Death’s eyes hollow o’er her shoulder dart
 A look to wring to tears then freeze the heart,
 Will love grow less ? ”

And in her hair wept softly and her breast
 Rose and was wet with tears ; like as, distressed,
 Night steals on Day rain sobbing thro’ her curls.
 “ Tho’ tears become thee even as priceless pearls,
 Weep not for love’s sake ! mine no gloom of doubt,
 But woe for sweet love’s death such dreams brought out.
 Nay, nay ; crowned, throned and flame-anointed he
 Kings our twin-kingdomed hearts eternally.
 Love, high in Heaven beginning and to cease
 No majesty when hearts are laid at peace ;
 But reign supreme, if souls have wrought as well,
 A god in Heaven or a god in Hell.
 Yea, Morgane, for the favor of his face
 All our rich world of love I will retrace :

“ Hurt in that battle where thy brother strove
 With those five kings thou wot’st of, dearest love,

Wherein the five were worsted; I was brought
To some king's castle on my shield, methought,—
Out of the grind of spears and roar of swords,
From the loud shields of battle-bloody lords,
Culled from the mountained slain where Havoc sprawled
Gorged to her eyes with carnage, growling crawled;—
By some tall damsels tiremaids of some queen
Stately and dark, who moved as if a sheen
Of starlight spread her presence; and she came
With healing herbs and searched my wounds. A dame
So marvelous in raiment silvery
I feared lest some attendant chaste were she
To that high Holy Grael, which Arthur hath
Sought ever widely by hoar wood and path;—
Thus not for me, a worldly one, to love,
Who loved her even to wonder; skied above
His worship as our moon above the Main,
That passions upward yearning in great pain,
And suffers wearily from year to year,
She peaceful pitiless with virgin cheer.—
Ah, ideal love, as merciless as fate!
And, oh, that savage aching which must wait
For its fulfillment, tortured love in tears,
Until that beauty dreamed of many years
Bends over one from luminous skies, so grand
One's weakness fears to touch its mastering hand,

And hesitates and stammers nothings weak,
And loves and loves with love that can not speak !
Ah, there 's the tyranny that breeds despair ;
Breaks hearts whose strong youth by one golden hair
Coiled 'round the throat is sooner strangled dumb
Than by a glancing dagger thrust from gloom
Of an old arras at the very hour
One thought one safest in one's guarded tower.—
Thus, Morgane, worshiping that lady I
Was speechless ; longing now to live, now die,
As her fine face suggested secrets of
Some passion kin to mine, or scorn of love
That dragged heroic humbleness to her feet,
For one long look that spake and made such sweet.
Ah, never dreamed I of what was to be,—
Nay ! nay ! how could I ? while that agony
Of doubtful love denied my heart too much,
Too much to dream of that perfection such
As was to grant me boisterous hours of life
And sever all the past as with a knife !

“ One night a tempest scourged and beat and lashed
The writhing forest and vast thunders crashed
Clamorous with clubs of leven, and anon,
Between the thunder pauses, seas would groan
Like some enormous curse a knight hath lured

From where it soared to maim it with his sword.
I, with eyes partly lidded, seemed to see
That cloudy, wide-wrenched night's eternity
Yawn hells of golden ghastliness; and sweep
Distending foams tempestuous up each steep
Of furious iron, where pale mermaids sit
With tangled hair black-blown, who, bit by bit,
Chant glimmering; beckoning on to strangling arms
Some hurt bark hurrying in the ravenous storm's
Resistless exultation; till there came
One breaker mounting inward, all aflame
With glow-worm green, to boom against the cliff
Its thunderous bulk—and there, sucked pale and stiff,
Tumbled in eddies up the howling rocks
My dead, drawn face; eyes lidless; matted locks
Oozed close with brine; tossed upward merrily
By streaming mermaids.—Madly seemed to see
The vampire echoes of the hoarse wood, who,
Collected, sought me; down the casement drew
Wet, shuddering fingers sharply; thronging fast
Up hooting turrets, fell thick screaming, cast
Down bastioned battlements trooped whistling off;
From the wild woodland growled a backward scoff.—
Then far away, hoofs of a thousand gales,
As wave rams wave up windy bluffs of Wales,
Loosed from the groaning hills, the cohorts loud,

Spirits of thunder, charioteered of cloud,
Roared down the rocking night cored with the glare
Of fiery eyeballs swimming ; their drenched hair
Blown black as rain unkempt back from black brows,
Wide mouths of storm that voiced a hell carouse
And bulged tight cheeks with wind, rolled riotous by
Ruining to ruinous cliffs to headlong die.

“ Once when the lightning made the casement glare
Squares touched to gold, between it rose her hair,
As if a raven’s wing had cut the storm
Death-driven seaward ; and a vague alarm
Stung me with terrors of surmise where hope
As yet pruned weak wings crippled by their scope.
And, lo, she kneeled low, radiant, wonderful,
Lawn-raimented and white ; kneeled low,—‘ to lull
These thoughts of night such storms might shape in thee,
All such to peace and sleep.’—Ah, God ! to see
Her like a benediction fleshed ! with her
Hearing her voice ! her cool hand wandering bare
Wistful on feverish brow thro’ long deep curls !
To see her rich throat’s carcaneted pearls
Rise as her pulses ! eyes’ large influence
Poured toward me straight as stars, whose sole defense
Against all storm is their bold beauty ! then
To feel her breathe and hear her speak again !

‘Love, mark,’ I said or dreamed I moaned in dreams,
 ‘How wails the tumult and the thunder gleams !
 As if of Arthur’s knights had charged two fields
 Bright as sun-winds of dawn ; swords, spears and shields
 Flashed lordly shocked ; had,—to a man gone down
 In burst of battle hurled,—lain silent sown.
 Love, one eternal tempest thus with thee
 Were calm, dead calm ! but, no!—for thee in me
 Such calm proves tempest. Speak ; I feel thy voice
 Throb soft, caressing silence, healing noise.’.

“Is radiance loved of radiance? day of day?
 Lithe beam of beam and laughing ray of ray?
 Hope loved of hope and happiness of joy,
 Or love of love, who hath the world for toy?
 And thou—thou lov’st my voice? fond Accolon !
 Why not—yea, why not?—nay!—I prithee!—groan
 Not for that thou hast had long since thine all.’
 She smiled; and dashed down storm’s black-crumbled
 Baptizing moonlight bathed her, foot and face [wall,
 Deluging, as my soul brake toward her grace
 With worship from despair and secret grief,
 That felt hot tears of heartsease sweet and brief.
 And one immortal night to me she said
 Words, lay I white in death had raised me red.
 ‘Rest now,’ they were, ‘I love thee with *such* love!—

Some speak of secret love, but God above
Hath knowledge and divinement.' . . . Passionate low,
' To lie by thee to-night my mind is':—So
She laughed;—' Sleep well!—for me? why, thy fast word
Of knighthood, look thou, and this naked sword
Laid in betwixt us. . . . Let it be a wall
Strong between love and lust and lov'st me all in all.'
Undid the goodly gold from her clasped waist;
Unbound deep locks; and, like a blossom faced,
Stood sweet an unswayed stem that ran to bud
In breasts and face a graceful womanhood.
And fragrance was to her as natural
As odor to the rose; and she a tall,
White ardor and white fervor in the room
Moved, some pale presence that with light doth bloom.
Then all mine eyes and lips and limbs were fire;
My tongue delirious throbbed a lawless lyre,
That harped loud words of laud for loveliness,
Inspired of such, but these I can not guess.
Then she, as pure as snows of peaks that keep
Sun-cloven crowns of virgin, vanquishing steep,
Frowned on me, and the thoughts, that in my brain
Had risen a glare of gems, set dull like rain,
And fair I spake her and with civil pain:
" 'Thine, sweet, a devil's kindness which is given
For earthly pleasure but bars out from Heaven.

Temptation harbored, like a bloody rust
On a bright blade, leaves ugly stains ; and lust
Is love's undoing when love's limbs are cast
A commonness to desire that makes unchaste ;
And this warm nearness of what should be hid
Makes love a lawless love. But, thou hast bid ;—
Rest thou ; I love thee, how,—I only know :
But all that love shall shout “out!” at love's foe.
And turning sighed into my hair ; and she
Stretched the broad blade's division suddenly.
And so we lay its fire between us twain ;
Unsleeping I, for, oh, that devil pain
Of passion in me that strove up and stood
A rebel wrangling with the brain and blood !
An hour stole by : she slept or seemed to sleep.
The winds of night came vigorous from the deep
With storm gusts of fresh-watered field and wold
That breathed of ocean meadows bluely rolled.
I drowsed and time passed ; stealing as for one
Whose drowsy life dreams in Avilion.
Vast bulks of black, wind-shattered rack went down
High casement squares of heaven, a crystal crown
Of bubbled moonlight on each monstrous head,
Like as great ghosts of giant kings long dead.
And then, meseemed, she lightly laughed and sighed,
So soft a taper had not bent aside,

And leaned a soft face seen thro' loosened hair
Above me, whisp'ring as if sweet in prayer,
'Behold, the sword! I take the sword away!'
It curved and clashed where the strewn rushes lay;
Shone glassy, glittering like a watery beam
Of moonlight in the moonlight. I did deem
She moved in sleep and dreamed perverse, nor wist
That which she did until two fierce lips kissed
My wondering eyes to wakement of her thought.
Then spake I, 'Love, my word! is it then naught?
Nay, nay, my word albeit the sword be gone!—
And wouldest thou try me? rest thou safe till dawn!
I will not thus forswear! my word stands fast!'
But now I felt hot, desperate kisses cast
On hair, eyes, throat and lips and over and over,
Low laughter of 'Sweet wretch! and thou—a lover?
What is that word if she thou gavest it
Unbind thee of it? lo, and she sees fit!'
Ah, Morgane, Morgane, then I knew 'twas thou,
Thou! thou! who only could such joy allow."

"And, oh, unburied passion of that night;
The sleepy birds too early piped of light;
Too soon came Light girt with a rosy breeze,
Strong from his bath, to wrestle with the trees,
A thewy hero; and, alas! too soon

Our scutcheoned oriel stained was overstrown
Of Dawn's air-jewels ; then I sang a strain
Of sleep that in my memory strives again :

“ Ethereal limbed the lovely Sleep should sit,
Her starbeam locks with some vague splendor lit,
Like that the glow-worm's emerald radiance sheds
Thro' twilight dew-drops globed on lily-beds.
Her face as fair as if of graven stone,
Yet dim and airy as a cloud alone
In the bare blue of Heaven, smiling sweet,
For languorous thoughts of love that flit and fleet
Short-rainbow-winged about her crumpled hair ;
Yet on her brow a pensiveness more fair,
Ungraspable and sad and lost, I wist,
Than thoughts of maiden whom her love hath kissed,
Who knows, thro' deepening eyes and drowsy breath,
Him weeping bent whiles she drifts on to death.
Full sweet and sorrowful and blithe withal
Should be her brow ; not wholly spiritual,
But tinged with mortal for the mortal mind,
And smote with flushings from some Eden wind ;
Hinting at heart's ease and a god's desire
Of pleasure hastening in a garb of fire
From some dim country over storied seas
Glassed of content and foamed of mysteries.

Her ears two sea-pearls' morning-tender pink,
And strung to harkening as if on a brink
Night with profundity of death and doubt,
Yet touched with awfulness of light poured out.
Ears strung to palpitations of heart throbs
As sea-shells waver with dim ocean sobs.
One hand, curved like a mist on dusking skies,
Hollowing smooth brows to shade dark velvet eyes,—
Dark-lashed and dewed of tear-drops beautiful,—
To sound the cowering conscience of the dull,
Sleep-sodden features in their human rest,
Ere she dare trust her pureness to that breast.
Large limbs diaphanous and fleeced with veil
Of wimpled heat, wove of the pulsing pale
Of rosy midnight, and stained thro' with stars
In golden cores; clusters of quivering bars
Of nebulous gold, twined round her fleecily.
A lucid shape vague in vague mystery.
Untrammelled bosoms swelling free and white
And prodigal of balm; cupped lilies bright,
That to the famished mind yield their pure, best,
Voluptuous sleep like honey sucked in rest."

Thus they communed. And there her castle stood
With slender towers ivied o'er the wood;
An ancient chapel creeper-buried near;

A forest vista, where faint herds of deer
Stalked like soft shadows ; where the hares did run,
Mavis and throstle caroled in the sun.
For it was Morgane's realm, embowered Gore ;
That rooky pile her palace whence she bore
With Urience sway ; but he at Camelot
Knew naught of intrigues here at Chariot.

II.

NOON ; and the wistful Autumn sat among
The lurid woodlands ; chiefs who now were wrung
By crafty ministers, sun, wind and frost,
To don imperial pomp at any cost.
On each wild hill they stood as if for war
Flaunting barbaric raiment wide and far ;
And burnt-out lusts in aged faces raged ;
Their tottering state by flattering zephyrs paged,
Who in a little fretful while, how soon !
Would work rebellion under some wan moon ;
Pluck their old beards deriding ; shriek and tear
Rich royalty ; sow tattered through the air
Their purple majesty ; and from each head
Dash down its golden crown, and in its stead
Set there a pale-death mockery of snow,
Leave them bemoaning beggars bowed with woe.

Blow, wood-wind, blow! now that all 's fresh and fine
As earth and wood can make it; fresh as brine
And rare with sodden scents of underbrush.
Ring, and one hears a cavalcade a-rush;
Bold blare of horns; shrill music of steel bows;—
A horn! a horn! the hunt is up and goes
Beneath the acorn-dropping oaks in green,—
Dark woodland green, a boar-spear held between
His selle and hunter's head, and at his thigh
A good, broad hanger, and one fist on high
To wind the rapid echoes from his horn,
That start the field birds from the sheavéd corn,
Uphurled in vollies of audacious wings,
That cease again when it no longer sings.
Away, away, they flash a belted band
From Camelot thro' that haze-ghostly land;
Hounds leashed and leamers and a flash of steel,
A tramp of horse and the long-baying peal
Of stag hounds whimp'ring and—behold! the hart,
A lordly height, doth from the covert dart;
And the big blood-hounds strain unto the chase.
A-hunt! a-hunt! the *pryce* seems but a pace
On ere 'tis wound; but now, where interlace
The dense-briered underwoods, the hounds have lost
The slot, there where a forest brook hath crossed
With intercepting waters full of leaves.

Beyond, the hart a tangled labyrinth weaves
Thro' dimmer boscage, and the wizard sun
Shapes many shadowy stags that seem to run
Wild herds before the baffled foresters.
And treed aloft a reckless laugh one hears,
As if some helping goblin from the trees
Mocked them the unbayed hart and made a breeze
His pursuivant of mocking. Hastening thence
Pursued King Arthur and King Urience
With one small brachet, till scarce hear could they
Their fellowship far-furthered course away
On fresher trace of hind or rugged boar
With haggard, hairy flanks, curled tusks and hoar
With fierce foam-fury ; and of these bereft
The kings continued in the slot they'd left.
And there the hart plunged gallant thro' the brake
Leaving a torn path shaking in his wake,
Down which they followed on thro' many a copse
Above whose brush, close on before, the tops
Of the large antlers swelled anon, and so
Were gone where beat the brambles to and fro.
And still they drove him hard ; and ever near
Seemed that great hart unwearied ; and such cheer
Still stung them to the chase. When Arthur's horse
Gasped mightily and lunging in his course
Lay dead, a lordly bay ; and Urience

Left his gray hunter dying near; and thence
They held the hunt afoot; when suddenly
Were they aware of a wide, roughened sea,
And near the wood the hart upon the sward
Bayed, panting unto death and winded hard.
Right so the king dispatched him and the *pryce*
Wound on his hunting bugle clearly thrice.

As if each echo, which that wild horn's blast
Waked from its sleep,—the quietude had cast
Tender as mercy on it,—in a band
Rose moving sounds of gladness hand in hand,
Came twelve fair damsels, sunny in sovereign white,
From that red woodland gliding. These each knight
Graced with obeisance and “Our lord,” said one,
“Tenders ye courtesy until the dawn;
The Earl Sir Damas; well in his wide keep,
Seen thither with due worship, ye shall sleep.”
And then they came o'erwearied to a hall,
An owlet-haunted pile, whose weedy wall
Towered based on crags rough, windy turrets high;
An old, gaunt giant-castle 'gainst a sky
Wherein the moon hung foam-faced, large and full.
Down on dank sea-foundations broke the dull,
Weird monotone of ocean, and wide rolled
The watery wilderness that was as old

As loud, defying headlands stretching out
Beneath still stars with a voluminous shout
Of wreck and wrath forever. Here the two
Were feasted fairly and with worship due
All errant knights; and then a damsel led
Each knight with flaring lamp unto his bed
Down separate corridores of that great keep;
And soon they rested in a heavy sleep.

And then King Arthur woke, and woke mid groans
Of dolorous knights; and 'round him lay the bones
Of many woful champions mouldering;
And he could hear the open ocean ring
Wild wasted waves above. And so he thought
“ It is some nightmare weighing me, distraught
By that long hunt;” and then he sought to shake
The horror off and to himself awake;
But still he heard sad groans and whispering sighs,
And deep in iron-ribbéd cells the eyes
Of pale, cadaverous knights shone fixed on him
Unhappy; and he felt his senses swim
With foulness of that cell, and, “ What are ye?
Ghosts of chained champions or a company
Of phantoms, bodiless fiends? If speak ye can,
Speak, in God's name! for I am here—a man!”
Then groaned the shaggy throat of one who lay

A dusky nightmare dying day by day,
Yet once of comely mien and strong withal
And greatly gracious ; but, now hunger-tall,
With scrawny beard and faded hands and cheeks :
“Sir knight,” said he, “know that the wretch who speaks
Is but an one of twenty knights here shamed
Of him who lords this castle, Damas named,
Who mews us here for slow starvation keen ;
Around you fade the bones of some eighteen
Tried knights of Britain ; and God grant that soon
My hunger-lengthened ghost will see the moon,
Beyond the vileness of this prisonment !”
With that he sighed and round the dungeon went
A rustling sigh, like saddened sin, and so
Another dim, thin voice complained their woe :—

“ He doth enchain us with this common end,
That he find one who will his prowess bend
To the attainment of his livelihood.
A younger brother, Ontzlake, hath he ; good
And courteous, withal most noble, whom
This Damas hates—yea, ever seeks his doom ;
Denying him to their estate all right
Save that he holds by main of arms and might.
And thro’ puissance hath he some fat fields
And one rich manor sumptuous, where he yields

Belated knights host's hospitality.
Then bold is Ontzlake, Damas cowardly.
For Ontzlake would decide by sword and lance
Body for body this inheritance ;
But Damas dotes on life so courageless ;
Thus on all knights perforce lays coward's stress
To fight for him or starve. For ye must know
That in his country he is hated so
That no helm here is who will take the fight ;
Thus fortunes it our plight is such a plight.”
Quoth he and ceased. And wondering at the tale
The King was thoughtful, and each faded, pale,
Poor countenance still conned him when he spake :
“ And what reward if one this battle take ? ”
“ Deliverance for all if of us one
Consent to be his party's champion.
But treachery and he are so close kin
We loathe the part as some misshapen sin,
And here would rather dally on to death
Than serving falseness save and slave our breath.”

“ May God deliver you for mercy, sirs ! ”
And right anon an iron noise he hears
Of chains clanked loose and bars jarred rusty back,
The heavy gate croak open ; and the black
Of that rank cell astonished was with light,

That danced fantastic with the frantic night.
One high torch sidewise worried by the gust
Sunned that lorn den of hunger, death and rust,
And one tall damsel vaguely vested, fair
With shadowy hair, poised on the rocky stair.
And laughing on the King, "What cheer?" said she ;
" God's life ! the keep stinks vilely ! and to see
So noble knights endungeoned hollowing here
Doth pain me sore with pity—but, what cheer ?"

"Thou mockest us ; for me the sorriest
Since I was suckled ; and of any quest
To me the most imperiling and strange.—
But what wouldest thou ?" said Arthur. She, " A change
I offer thee, through thee to these with thee,
And thou but grant me in love's courtesy
To fight for Damas and his livelihood.
And if thou wilt not—look ! thou seest this brood
Of lean and dwindled bellies specter-eyed,
Keen knights erst who refused me ?—so decide."
Then thought the King of the sweet sky, the breeze
That blew delirious over waves and trees ;
Thick fields of grasses and the sunny earth
Whose beating heat filled the red heart with mirth,
And made the world one sovereign pleasure house
Where king and serf might revel and carouse ;

Then of the hunt on autumn-plaintive hills ;
Lone forest chapels by their radiant rills :
His palace rich at Caerleon upon Usk,
And Camelot's loud halls that thro' the dusk
Blazed far and bloomed a rose of revelry ;
Or in the misty morning shadowy
Loomed grave for audience. And then he thought
Of his Round Table and that Grael wide sought
In haunted holds on demon-sinful shore ;
Then marveled of what wars would rise and roar
With dragon heads unconquered and devour
This realm of Britain and pluck up that flower
Of chivalry whence ripened his renown :
And then the reign of some besotted crown,
A bandit king of lust, idolatry—
And with that thought for tears he could not see :
Then of his greatest champions, King Ban's son,
And Galahad and Tristram, Accolon :
And then, ah God ! of his dear Guenevere,
And with that thought—to starve and moulder here ?—
For, being unfriend to Arthur and his court,
Well wist he this grim Earl would bless that sport
Of fortune which had fortuned him so well
To have to starve his sovereign in a cell.—
In the entombing rock where ground the deep ;
And all the life shut in his limbs did leap

Thro' eager veins and sinews fierce and red,
Stung on to action, and he rose and said :
"That which thou askest is right hard, but, lo !
To rot here harder ; I will fight his foe.
But, mark, I have no weapons and no mail,
No steed against that other to avail."

"Fear not for that ; and thou shalt lack none, sire."
And so she led the path : her torch's fire
Scaring wild spidery shadows at each stride
From cob-webbed coignes of scowling passes wide,
That labyrinthed the rock foundation strong
Of that ungainly fortress bleak of wrong.
At length they came to a nail-studded door,
Which she unlocked with one harsh key she bore
Mid many keys bunched at her girdle ; thence
They issued on a terraced eminence.
Beneath the sea broke sounding ; and the King
Breathed open air that had the smell and sting
Of brine morn-vigored and blue-billowed foam ;
For in the East the second dawning's gloam,
Since that unlucky chase, was freaked with streaks
Red as the ripe stripes of an apple's cheeks.
And so within that larger light of dawn
It seemed to Arthur now that he had known
This maiden at his court, and so he asked.

But she, well-tutored, her real person masked,
And answered falsely ; “ Nay, deceive thee not ;
Thou saw’st me ne’er at Arthur’s court, I wot.
For here it likes me best to sing and spin
And work the hangings my sire’s halls within :
No courts or tournaments or gallants brave
To flatter me and love ! for me—the wave,
The forest, field and sky ; the calm, the storm ;
My garth wherein I walk to think ; the charm
Of uplands redolent at bounteous noon
And full of sunlight ; night’s free stars and moon ;
White ships that pass some several every year ;
These lonesome towers and those wild mews to hear.”
“ An owlet maid ! ” the King laughed. But, untrue
Was she, and of false Morgane’s treasonous crew,
Who worked vile wiles ev’n to the slaying of
The King, half-brother, whom she did not love.
And presently she brought him where in state
This swarthy Damas with mailed cowards sate. . . .

King Urience that dawning woke and found
Himself safe couched at Camelot and wound
In Morgane’s arms ; nor weened he how it was
That this thing secretly had come to pass.
But Accolon at Chariot sojourned still
Content with his own dreams ; for ’twas the will

Of Morgane thus to keep him hidden here
For her desire's excess, where everywhere
In Gore by wood and river pleasure houses,
Pavilions, rose of rock for love carouses;
And there in one, where 'twas her dearest wont
To list a tinkling, falling water fount,—
Which thro' sweet talks of idle paramours
At sensuous ease on tumbled beds of flowers,
Had caught a laughing language light thereof,
And rambled ever gently whispering, "love!"—
On cool white walls her hands had deftly draped
A dark rich hanging, where were worked and shaped
Her fullest hours of pleasure flesh and mind,
Imperishable passions, which could wind
The past and present quickly; and could mate
Dead loves to kisses, and intoxicate
With moon-soft words of past delight and song
The heavy heart that wronged forgot the wrong.
And there beside it pooled the urnéd well,
And slipping thence thro' dripping shadows fell
From rippling rock to rock. Here Accolon,
With Morgane's hollow lute, one studious dawn
Came solely; with not ev'n her brindled hound
To leap beside him o'er the gleaming ground;
No handmaid lovely of his loveliest fair,
Or paging dwarf in purple with him there;

But this her lute, about which her perfume
Clung odorous of memories, that made bloom
Her flowing features rosy to his eyes,
That saw the words, his sense could but surmise,
Shaped on dim, breathing lips ; the laugh that drunk
Her deep soul-fire from eyes wherein it sunk
And slowly waned away to smouldering dreams,
Fathomless with thought, far in their dove-gray gleams.
And so for those most serious eyes and lips,
Faint, filmy features, all the music slips
Of buoyant being bubbling to his voice
To chant her praises ; and with nervous poise
His fleet, trained fingers call from her long lute
Such riotous notes as must make madly mute
The nightingale that listens quivering.
And well he knows that winging hence it'll sing
These aching notes, whose beauties burn and pain
Its anguished heart now sobless, not in vain
Wild 'neath her casement in that garden old
Dingled with heavy roses ; in the gold
Of Camelot's stars and pearl-encrusted moon ;
And if it dies, the heartache of the tune
Shall clamor stormy passion at her ear,
Of death more dear than life if love be there ;
Melt her quick eyes to tears, her throat to sobs
Tumultuous heaved, while separation throbs

Hard at her heart, and longing rears to Death
 Two prayerful eyes of pleading " for one breath—
 An ardor of fierce life—crushed in his arms
 Close, close ! and, oh, for such, all these smooth charms,
 Full, sentient charms voluptuous evermore !"
 And sweet to know these sensitive vows shall soar
 Ev'n to the dull ear of her drowsy lord
 Beside her ; heart-defying with each word
 Harped in the bird's voice rhythmically clear.
 And thus he sang to her who was not there :

" She comes ! her presence, like a moving song
 Breathed soft of loveliest lips and lute-like tongue,
 Sways all the gurgling forests from their rest :
 I fancy where her rustling foot is pressed,
 So faltering, love seems timid, but how strong
 'That darling love that flutters in her breast !

" She comes ! and the green vistas are stormed thro'—
 As if wild wings, wet-varnished with dripped dew,
 Had dashed a sudden sunbeam tempest past,
 —With her eyes' inspiration clearly chaste ;
 A rhythmic lavishment of bright gray blue,
 Long arrows of her eyes perfection cast.

" Ah, God ! she comes ! and, Love, I feel thy breath,
 Like the soft South who idly wandereth
 Thro' musical leaves of laughing laziness,
 Page on before her, how sweet—none can guess !
 To say my soul ' Here 's harmony dear as death
 To sigh wild vows, or utterless, to bless.'

“She comes! ah, God! and all my brain is brave
 To war for words to laud her and to lave
 Her queenly beauty in such vows whereof
 May hush melodious cooings of a dove:
 For her light feet the favored path to pave
 With oaths, like roses, raving mad with love.

“She comes! in me a passion—as the moon
 Works madness in strong men—my blood doth swoon
 Towards her glory; and I feel her soul
 Cling lip to lip with mine; and now the whole
 Mix with me, aching like a tender tune
 Exhausted; lavished in a god’s control.

“She comes! ah, Christ! ye eager stars that grace
 The fragmentary skies, that dimple space,
 Clink, and I hear her harp-sweet footfalls come:
 Ah, wood-indulging, violet-vague perfume,
 Art of her presence, of her wild-flower face,
 That like some gracious blossom stains the gloom?

“Oh, living exultation of the blood!
 That now—as sunbursts, the almighty mood
 Of some moved god, scatter the storm that roars,
 And hush—her love like some spent splendor pours
 Into it all immaculate maidenhood,
 And all the heart that hesitates—adores.

“Vanquished! so vanquished!—ah, triumphant sweet!
 The height of heaven—supine at thy feet!
 Where love feasts crowned, and basks in such a glare
 As hearts of suns burn, in thine eyes and hair,
 Unutterable with raveled fires that cheat
 The ardent clay of me and make me air.

“ And so, rare witch, thy blood, like some lewd wine,
Shall subtly make me, like thee, half divine ;
And,—sweet rebellion !—clasp thee till thou urge
To combat close of savage kisses : surge
A war that rubies all thy proud cheeks’ shine,—
Slain, struggling blushes,—till white truce emerge.

“ My life for thine, thus bartered lip to lip !
A striving being pulsant, that shall slip
Like song and flame in sense from thee to me ;
Nor held, but quick rebartered thence to thee :
So our two loves be as a singleship,
Ten thousand loves as one eternally.”

Babbled the woodland like a rocky brook ;
And as the ecstacy of foliage shook,
Hot pieces of bright, sunny heavens glanced
Like polished silver thro’ pale leaves that danced.
As one hath seen some green-gowned huntress fair,
Morn in her cheeks and midnight in her hair,
Eyes clear as hollow dews ; clean limbs as lithe
As limbs swift morning moves ; a voice as blithe
As high hawk’s ringing thro’ the falling dews ;
Pant thro’ the bramble-matted avenues,— [green,
Where brier and thorn have gashed her gown’s pinched
About bright breasts and arms, the milky sheen
Of white skin healthy pouting out; her face,
Ardent and flushed, fixed on the lordly chase.

III.

THE eve now came; and shadows cowled the way
Like somber palmers, who have kneeled to pray
Beside a wayside shrine, and rosy rolled
Up the capacious West a grainy gold,
Luxuriant fluid, burned thro' strong, keen skies,
Which seemed as towering gates of Paradise
Surged dim, far glories on the hungry gaze.
And from that sunset down the roseate ways,
To Accolon, who with his idle lute,
Reclined in reverie against a root
Of a great oak, a fragment of that West,
A dwarf, in crimson satin tightly dressed,
Skipped like a leaf the rather frosts have burned
And cozened to a fever red, that turned
And withered all its sap. And this one came
From Camelot; from his beloved dame,
Morgane the Fay. He on his shoulder bore
A burning blade wrought strange with wizard lore,
Runed mystically; and a scabbard which
Glared venomous, with angry jewels rich.
He, louting to the knight, "Sir knight," said he,
"Your lady with all sweetest courtesy
Assures you—ah, unworthy messenger

I of such brightness!—of that love of her.”
Then doffing that great baldric, with the sword
To him he gave: “And this from him, my lord
King Arthur; even his Excalibur,
The sovereign blade, which Merlin gat of her,
The Ladye of the Lake, who Launcelot
Fostered from infanthood, as well you wot,
In some wierd mere in Briogn’s tangled lands
Of charms and mist; where filmy fairy bands
By lazy moons of Autumn spin their fill
Of giddy morrice on the frosty hill.
By goodness of her favor this is sent;
Who craved King Arthur boon with this intent:
That soon for her a desperate combat one
With one of mightier prowess were begun;
And with the sword Excalibur right sure
Were she against that champion to endure.
The blade flame-trenchant, but more prize the sheath
Which stauncheth blood and guardeth from all death.”
He said: and Accolon looked on the sword,
A mystic falchion, and, “It shall wend hard
With him thro’ thee, unconquerable blade,
Whoe’er he be, who on my Queen hath laid
Stress of unworship: and the hours as slow
As palsied hours in Purgatory go
For those unmassed, till I have slain this foe!

My purse, sweet page ; and now—to her who gave,
Dispatch ! and this :—to all commands—her slave,
To death obedient. In love or war
Her love to make me all the warrior.

Plead her grace mercy for so long delay
From love that dies an hourly death each day
Till her white hands kissed he shall kiss her face,
By which his life breathes in continual grace.”
Thus he commanded ; and incontinent
The dwarf departed like a red ray sent
From rich down-flowering clouds of suffused light
Winged o'er long, purple glooms ; and with the night,
Whose votaress cypress stoled the dying strife
Softly of day, and for whose perished life
Gave heaven her golden stars, in dreamy thought
Wends Accolon to hazy Chariot.

And it befell him wandering one dawn,
As was his wont, across a dew-drenched lawn,
Glad with night freshness and elastic health
In sky and earth, that lavished worlds of wealth
From heady breeze and racy smells, a knight
And lofty lady met he ; gay bedight,
With following of six esquires ; and they
Held on straight wrists the jess'd gerfalcon gray,
And rode a-hawking o'er the leas of Gore

From Ontzlake's manor, where he languished ; sore
Hurt in the lists, a spear thrust in his thigh :
Who had besought—for much he feared to die—
This knight and his fair lady, as they rode
To hawk near Chariot, the Queen's abode,
That they would pray her in all charity
Fare post to him,—for in chirurgery
Of all that land she was the greatest leach,—
And her to his recovery beseech.
So, Accolon saluted, they drew rein,
And spake their message,—for right over fain
Were they toward their sport,—that he might bare
Petition to that lady. But, not there
Was Arthur's sister, as they well must wot ;
But now a se'nnight lay at Camelot,
Of Guenevere the guest ; and there with her
Four other queens of farther Britain were :
Isoud of Ireland, she of Cornwall Queen,
King Mark's wife ; who right rarely then was seen
At court for jealousy of Mark, who knew
Her to that lance of Lyonesse how true
Since mutual quaffing of a philter ; while
How guilty Guenevere on such could smile :
She of Northgales and she of Eastland : and
She of the Out Isles Queen. A fairer band
For sovereignty and love and loveliness

Was not in any realm to grace and bless.
Then quoth the knight, "Ay? see how fortune turns
And varies like an April day, that burns
Now welkins blue with calm, now scowls them down,
Revengeful, with a black storm's wrinkled frown.
For, look, this Damas, who so long hath lain
A hiding vermin, fearful of all pain,
Dark in his bandit towers by the deep,
Wakes from a five years' torpor and a sleep;
So sends dispatch a courier to my lord
With, 'Lo! behold! to-morrow with the sword
Earl Damas by his knight at point of lance
Decides the issue of inheritance,
Body to body, or by champion.'

Right hard to find such ere to-morrow dawn.
Though sore bestead lies Ontzlake, and he could,
Right fain were he to save his livelihood.
Then mused Sir Accolon: "The adventure goes
Ev'n as my Lady fashioneth; who knows
But what her arts develop this and make?"
And thus to those: "His battle I will take,—
And he be so conditioned, harried of
Estate and life,—in knighthood and for love.
Conduct me thither."

And, gramercied, then
Mounted a void horse of that wondering train,

And thence departed with two squires. And they
Came to a lone, dismantled priory
Hard by a castle gray on whose square towers,
Machicolated, o'er the forest's bowers,
The immemorial morning bloomed and blushed.
A woodland manor olden, dark embushed
In wild and woody hills. And then one wound
An echoy horn, and with the boundless sound
The drawbridge rumbled moatward clanking, and
Into a paved court passed that little band. . . .

When all the world was morning, gleam and glare
Of far deluging glory, and the air
Sang with the wood-bird, like a humming lyre
Swept bold of minstrel fingers wire on wire;
Ere that fixed hour of prime came Arthur armed
For battle royally. A black steed warmed
A fierce impatience 'neath him cased in mail,
Huge, foreign; and accoutered head to tail
In costly sendal; rearward wine-dark red,
Amber as sunlight to his fretful head.
Firm, heavy armor blue had Arthur on
Beneath a robe of honor, like the dawn,
Satin and diapered and purflewed deep
With lordly golden purple; whence did sweep
Two hanging acorn tuftings of fine gold,

And at his thigh a falchion, long and bold,
Heavy and triple-edged ; its scabbard, red
Cordovan leather ; thence a baldric led
Of new cut deer-skin ; this laborious wrought,
And curiously with slides of gold was fraught,
And buckled with a buckle white that shone,
Bone of the sea-horse, tongued with jet-black bone.
And, sapphire-set, a burgonet of gold
Barbaric, wyvern-crested whose throat rolled
A flame-sharp tongue of agate, and whose eyes
Glowed venomous great rubies fierce of prize.
And in his hand a wiry lance of ash,
Lattened with finest silver, like a flash
Of sunlight in the morning shone a-gash.
Clad was his squire most richly ; he whose head
Curled with close locks of yellow tinged to red :
Of noble bearing ; fair face ; hawk eyes keen,
And youthful, bearded chin. Right well beseen,
Scarfed with blue satin ; on his shoulder strong
One broad gold brooch chased strangely, thick and long.
His legs in hose of rarest Totness clad,
And parti-colored leatherne shoes he had
Gold-latched ; and in his hand a bannered spear
Speckled and bronzen sharpened in the air.

So with his following, while lay like scars
The blue mist thin along the woodland bars,

Thro' dew and fog, thro' shadow and thro' ray
Joustward Earl Damas led the forest way.
Then to King Arthur when arrived were these
To where the lists shone silken thro' the trees,
Bannered and draped, a wimpled damsel came,
Secret, upon a palfrey all aflame
With sweat and heat of hurry, and, "From her,
Your sister Morgane, your Excalibur,
With tender greeting: For ye well have need
In this adventure of him. So, God speed!"
And so departed suddenly: nor knew
The king but this his weapon tried and true.
But brittle this and fashioned like thereof,
And false of baser metal, in unlove
And treason to his life, of her of kin
Half sister, Morgane—an unnatural sin.

Then heralded into the lists he rode.
Opposed flashed Accolon, who light bestrode,
Exultant, proud in talisman of that sword,
A dun horse lofty as a haughty lord,
Pure white about each hollow, pasterned hoof.
Equipped shone knight and steed in arms of proof,
Dappled with yellow variegated plate
Of Spanish laton. And of sovereign state
His surcoat robe of honor white and black

Of satin, red-silk needled front and back
Then blackly bordered. And above his robe
That two-edged sword,—a throbbing golden globe
Of vicious jewels,—thrust its burning hilt,
Its broad belt, tawny and with gold-work gilt,
Clasped with the eyelid of a black sea-horse
Whose tongue was rosy gold. And stern as Force
His visored helmet burned like fire, of rich
And bronzen laton hammered; and on which
An hundred crystals glittered, thick as on
A silver web bright-studding dews of dawn.
The casque's tall crest a taloned griffin ramped,
In whose horned brow one virtuous jewel stamped.
An ashen spear round-shafted, overlaid
With fine blue silver, whereon colors played,
Firm in his iron gauntlet lithely swayed.

Intense on either side an instant stood
Glittering as serpents which, with Spring renewed,
In glassy scales meet on some greening way,
Angry advance, quick tongues at poisonous play.
Then clanged a herald's clarion and sharp heels,
Harsh-spurred, each champion's springing courser feels
Touch to red onset; the adventured spears
Hurled like two sun-bursts of a storm when clears
Laborious thunders; and in middle course

Shrieked shrill the unpierced shields ; mailed horse from
Lashed madly pawing—and a hoarse roar rang [horse
From buckram lists, till the wild echoes sang
Of leagues on leagues of forest and of cliff.
Rigid the proof-shelled warriors passed and stiff
Whither their squires fresher spears upheld ;
Nor stayed to breathe ; but scarcely firmly selled
Launched deadly forward. Shield to savage shield
Opposing ; crest to crest, whose fronts did wield
A towering war's unmercifulest scath ;
Rocking undaunted, glared wan withering wrath
From balls of jeweled eyes, and raging stood
Slim, slippery bodies, in the sun like blood.
The lance of Accolon, as on a rock
Long storm-launched foam breaks baffled, with the shock,
On Arthur's sounding shield burst splintered force ;
But him resistless Arthur's,—high from horse
Sell-lifted,—ruinous bare crashing on
A long sword's length ; unsaddled Accolon
For one stunned moment lay. Then rising, drew
The great sword at his hip, that shone like dew
Fresh flashed in morn. "Descend ;" he stiffly said,
"To proof of better weapons head for head !
Enough of spears, to swords !" and so the knight
Addressed him to the King. Dismounting light,
Arthur his moon-bright brand unsheathed, and high

Each covering shield gleamed slanting to the sky,
Relentless, strong, and stubborn ; underneath
Their wary shelters foined the glittering death
Of stolid steel thrust livid arm to arm :
As cloud to cloud growls up a soaring storm
Above the bleak wood and lithe lightnings work
Brave blades wild warring, in the black that lurk,
Thus fenced and thrust—one tortoise shield descends,
Leaps a fierce sword shrill,—like a flame which sends
A long fang heavenward,—for a crushing stroke ;
Swings hard and trenchant, and, resounding heard,
Sings surly helmward full ; defiance reared
Soars to a brother blow to shriek again
Blade on brave blade. And o'er the battered plain,
Forward and backward, blade on baleful blade,
Teeth clenched as visors where the fierce eyes made
A cavernous, smouldering fury, shield at shield,
Unflinchingly remained and scorned to yield.

So Arthur drew aside to rest upon
His falchion for a pause ; but Accolon
As yet, thro' virtue of that magic sheath
Fresh and almighty, being no nearer death
Thro' loss of blood than when the trial begun,
Chafed with delay. But Arthur with the sun,
Its thirsty heat, the loss from wounds of blood,

Leaned fainting weary and so resting stood.
Cried Accolon, "Here is no time for rest!
Defend thee!" and straight on the monarch pressed;
"Defend or yield thee as one recreant!"
Full on his helm a hewing blow did plant,
Which beat a flying fire from the steel;
Smote, like one drunk with wine, the King did reel,
Breath, brain bewildered. Then, infuriate,
Nerve-stung with vigor by that blow, in hate
Gnarled all his strength into one stroke of might,
And in both fists the huge blade knotted tight,
Swung red, terrific to a sundering stroke.—
As some bright wind that hurls th' uprooted oak,—
Boomed full the beaten burgonet he wore:
Hacked thro' and thro' the crest, and cleanly shore
The golden boasting of its griffin fierce
With hollow clamor down astounded ears:
No further thence—but, shattered to the grass,
That brittle blade, crushed as if made of glass,
Into hot pieces like a broken ray
Burst sunward and in feverish fragments lay.
Then groaned the King unarmed; and so he knew
This no Excalibur; that tried and true
Most perfect tempered, runed and mystical.
Sobbed, "*Oh, hell-false! betray me?*"—Then withal
Him seemed this foe, who fought with so much stress,

So long untiring, and with no distress
Of wounds or heat, through treachery bare his brand ;
And then he knew it by its hilt that hand
Clutched to an avenging stroke. For Accolon
In madness urged the belted battle on
His King defenseless ; who, the hilted cross
Of that false weapon grasped, beneath the boss
Of his deep-dented shield crouched ; and around
Crawled the unequal conflict o'er the ground,
Sharded with shattered spears and off-hewn bits
Of shivered steel and gold that burnt in fits.
So hunted, yet defiant, cowering
Beneath his bossy shield's defense, the King
Persisted stoutly. And, devising still
How to secure his sword and by what skill,
Him so it fortuned when most desperate :
In that hot chase they came where shattered late
Lay tossed the truncheon of a bursten lance,
Which deftly seized, to Accolon's advance
He wielded valorous. Against the fist
Smote where the gauntlet husked the nervous wrist,
Which strained the weapon to a wrathful blow ;
Palsied, the tightened sinews of his foe
Loosened from effort, and, the falchion seized,
Easy was yielded. Then the wroth King squeezed,
—Hurling the moon-disk of his shield afar,—

Him in both knotted arms of wiry war,
Rocked sidewise twice or thrice,—as one hath seen
Some stern storm take an ash tree, roaring green,
Nodding its sappy bulk of trunk and boughs
To dizziness, from tough, coiled roots carouse
Its long height thundering;—so King Arthur shook
Sir Accolon and headlong flung; then took,
Tearing away, that scabbard from his side,
Tossed thro' the breathless lists, that far and wide
Gulped in the battle voiceless. Then right wroth
Secured Excalibur, and grasped of both
Wild hands swung glittering and brought bitter down
On rising Accolon; steel, bone and brawn
Hewed thro' that blow; unsettled every sense:
Bathed in a world of blood his limbs grew tense
And writhen then ungathered limp with death.
Bent to him Arthur, from the brow beneath,
Unlaced the helm and doffed it and so asked,
When the fair forehead's hair curled dark uncasqued,
“Say! ere I slay thee, whence and what thou art?
What King, what court be thine? and from what part,
Speak! or thou diest!—Yet, that brow, methinks
I have beheld it—where? say, ere death drinks
The soul-light from life's cups, thine eyes! thou art—
What art thou, speak!”

He answered slow and short

With tortured breathing: "I?—one, Accolon
Of Gaul, a knight of Arthur's court—at dawn—
God wot what now I am for love so slain!"
Then seemed the victor spasmed with keen pain,
Covered with mailed hands his visored face;
"Thou Accolon? art Accolon?" a space
Exclaimed and conned him: then asked softly, "Say,
Whence gatest thou this sword, or in what way
Thou hadst it, speak?" But wandering that knight
Heard dully, senses clodded thick with night;
Then rallying earthward: "Woe, woe worth the sword!
—From love of love who lives, for love yet lord!—
Morgane!—thy love for love in love hadst made
Me strong o'er kings an hundred! to have swayed
Britain! had this not risen like a fate,
Spawned up, a Hell's miscarriage sired of Hate!—
A king? thou curse! a gold and blood crowned king,
With Arthur's sister queen?—'Twas she who schemed.
And there at Chariot we loved and dreamed
Gone some twelve months. There so we had devolved
How Arthur's death were compassed and resolved
Each liberal morning, like an almoner,
Prodigal of silver to the begging air;
Each turbulent eve that in heaven's turquoise rolled
Convulsive fiery glories deep in gold;
Each night—hilarious heavens vast of night!—

Boisterous with quivering stars buoyed bubble-light
In flexuous labyrinths o' the intricate sphere.
We dreamed and spake Ambition at our ear—
Nay ! a crowned curse and crimeful clad she came,
To me, that woman, brighter than a flame ;
And laughed on me with pouting lips up-pursed
For kisses which I gave for love : How cursed
Was I thereafter ! For, lie fleshed in truth,
She shrivels to a hag ! Behind that youth
Ugly, misshapen ; Lust not Love, wherein
Germs pregnant seed of Hell for hate and sin.—
I seek for such the proudest height of seat,
King Arthur's kingdom, and bold fame complete ?—
Harlot !—sweet spouse of Urience King of Gore !—
Sweet harlot !—here's that death determined o'er !
And now thou hast thy dream, and dreaming grieve
That death so ruins it ?—Thy mouth to shrieve !—
Nay, nay, I love thee ! witness bare this field !
I love thee !—heart, dost love her and yet yield ?—
Enew ! enow ! so hale me hence to die !”

Then anger in the good King's gloomy eye
Burnt, instant-embered, as one oft may see
A star leak out of heaven and cease to be.
Slow from his visage he his visor raised,
And on the dying one mute moment gazed,

Then low bespake him grimly: “ Accolon,
I am that King.” He with an awful groan,
Blade-battered as he was, beheld and knew;
Strained to his tottering knees and haggard drew
Up full his armored tallness, hoarsely cried,
“ The King!” and at his mailed feet clashed and died.
Then rose a world of anxious faces pressed
About King Arthur, who, though wound-distressed,
Bespake that multitude: “ Whiles breath and power
Remain, judge we these brethren: This harsh hour
Hath yielded Damas all this rich estate;—
So it is his—allotted his of Fate
Thro’ might of arms; so let it be to him.
For, stood our oath on knighthood not so slim
But that it hath this strong conclusion:
This much by us as errant knight is done:
Now our decree as King of Britain, hear:
We do adjudge this Damas banned fore’er,
Outlawed and exiled from all shores and isles
Of farthest Britain in its many miles.
One month be his—no more! then will we come
Even with an iron host to seal his doom;
If he be not departed over seas,
Hang naked from his battlements to please
Of carrion ravens and wild hawks the crows.
Thus much for Damas. But our pleasure draws

Toward sir Ontzlake, whom it likes the King
To take into his knightly following
Of that Round Table royal.—Stand our word!—
But I am overweary; take my sword;—
Unharness me; for, battle worn, I tire
With bruises' aches and wounds mad with fire;
And monasteryward would I right fain,
Even Glastonbury and with me the slain.”
So bare they then the wounded King away,
The dead behind. So, closed the Autumn day.

* * * * *

But when within that abbey he waxed strong,
The King remembering him of all the wrong
That Damas had inflicted on the land,
Commanded Lionell with a staunch band
This weed’s out-stamping if still rooted there.
He riding thither to that robber lair,
Led Arthur’s hopefulest helms, when thorn on thorn
Reddened an hundred spears one winter morn;
Built up, a bulk of bastioned rock on rock,
Vast battlements, that loomed above the shock
Of freshening foam that climbed with haling hands,
Lone cloudy-clustered turrets in loud lands
Set desolate,—mournful o’er wide, frozen flats,—
Found hollow towers the haunt of owls and bats.

IV.

HATE, born of Wrath and mother red of Crime,
In Hell was whelped ere the hot hands of time,
Artificer of God, had coined one world
From formless forms of void and 'round it furled
Its lordly raiment of the day and night,
And germed its womb for seasons throed with might :
And Hell sent Hate to man to hate or use,
To serve itself by serving and amuse. . . .

For her half brother Morgane had conceived
A morbid hatred ; in that much she grieved,
Envious and jealous, for that high renown
And majesty the King for his fast crown
Thro' worship had acquired. And once he said,
"The closest kin to state are those to dread :
No honor such to crush : envenoming
All those kind tongues of blood that try to sing
Petition to the soul, while conscience quakes
Huddled, but stern to hearts whose cold pride takes."
And well she knew that Arthur : mightier
Than Accolon, without Excalibur
Were as a stingless hornet in the joust
With all his foreign weapons. So her trust
Smiled certain of conclusion ; eloquent

Gave lofty heart bold hope that at large eyes
Piled up imperial dreams of power and prize.
And in her carven chamber, oaken dark,
Traceried and arrased, o'er the barren park
That dripped with Autumn,—for November lay
Swathed frostily in fog on every spray,—
Thought at her tri-arched casement lone, one night,
Ere yet came knowledge of that test of might.
Her lord in slumber and the castle dull
With silence or with sad wind-music full.
“ And he removed?—fond fool! *he is removed!*
Death-dull from feet to hair and graveward shoved
From royalty to that degraded state
But purpler pomp! But, see! regenerate
Another monarch rises—Accolon!—
Love! Love! with state more ermined; balmy son
Of gods not men, and nobler hence to rule.
Sweet Love almighty, terrible to school
Harsh hearts to gentleness!—Then all this realm's
Iron-huskéd flower of war, which overwhelms
With rust and havoc, shall explode and bloom
An asphodel of peace with joy's perfume.
And then, sweet Launcelots and sweet Tristrams proud,
Sweet Gueneveres, sweet Isouds, now allowed
No pleasures but what wary, stolen hours
In golden places have their flaming flowers,

Shall have curled feasts of passion evermore.
Poor out-thrust Love, now shivering at the door,
No longer, sweet neglected, thou thrust off,
Insulted and derided: nor the scoff
Of bully Power, whose heart of insult flings
Off for the roar of arms the appeal that clings
And lifts a tearful, prayerful pitiful face
Up from his brutal feet: this shrine where grace
Lays woman's life for every sacrifice—
To him so little, yet of what pure price,
Her all, being all her all for love!—her soul
Life, honor, earth and firmamental whole
Of God's glad universe; stars, moon and sun;
Creation, death; life ended, life begun.
And if by fleshly love all Heaven's debarred,
Its sinuous revolving spheres instarred,
Then Hell were Heaven with love to those who knew
Love which God's Heaven encouraged—love that drew
Hips, head and hair in fiends' devouring claws
Down, down its pit's hurled sucking, as down draws,—
Yet lip to narrow lip with whom we love,—
A whirlwind some weak, crippled, fallen dove.

“ Then this lank Urience? He who is lord.—
Where is thy worry? for, hath he no sword?
No dangerous dagger I, hid softly here

Sharp as an adder's fang ? or for that ear
No instant poison which insinuates,
Tightens quick pulses, while one breathing waits,
With ice and death ? For often men who sleep
On eider-down wake not, but closely keep
Such secrets in their graves to rot and rot
To dust and maggots ;—of these—which his lot ?”
Thus she conspired with her that rainy night
Lone in her chamber ; when no haggard, white,
Wan, watery moon dreamed on the streaming pane,
But on the leads beat an incessant rain,
And sighed and moaned a weary wind along
The turrets and torn poplars stirred to song.

So grew her face severe as skies that take
Dark forces of full storm, sound-shod, that shake
With murmurous feet black hills, and stab with fire
A pine some moaning forest mourns as sire.
So touched her countenance that dark intent ;
And to still eyes stern thoughts a passion sent,
As midnight waters luminous glass deep
Suggestive worlds of austere stars in sleep,
Vague ghostly gray locked in their hollow gloom.
Then as if some vast wind had swept the room,
Silent, intense, had raised her from her seat,
Of dim, great arms had made her a retreat,

Secret as love to move in, like some ghost,
Noiseless as death and subtle as sharp frost,
Poised like a light and borne as carefully,
Trod she the gusty hall where shadowy
The stirring hangings rolled a Pagan war.
And there the mail of Urience shone. A star,
Glimmering above, a dying cresset dropped
From the stone vault and flared.. And here she stopped
And took the sword bright, burnished by his page,
And ruddy as a flame with restless rage.
Grasping this death unto the chamber where
Slept innocent her spouse she moved—an air
Twined in soft, glossy sendal ; or a fit
Of faery song a wicked charm in it,
A spell that sings seductive on to death.
Then paused she at one chamber ; for a breath
Listened : and here her son Sir Ewain slept,
He who of ravens a black army kept,
In war than fiercest men more terrible,
That tore forth eyes of kings who blinded fell.
Sure that he slept, to Urience stole and stood
Dim by his couch. About her heart hot blood
Caught strangling, then throbbed thudding fever up
To her broad eyes, like wine whirled in a cup.
Then came rare Recollection, with a mouth
Sweet as the honeyed sunbeams of the South

Trickling thro' perplexed ripples of low leaves ;
To whose faint form a veil of starshine cleaves
Intricate gauze from memoried eyes to feet ;—
Feet sandaled with crushed, sifted snows and fleet
To come and go and airy anxiously.
She, trembling to her, like a flower a bee
Nests in and makes an audible mouth of musk
Dripping a downy language in the dusk,
Laid lips to ears and luted memories of
Now hateful Urience :—Her maiden love,
That willing went from Caerleon to Gore
One dazzling day of Autumn. How a boar,
Wild as the wonder of the blazing wood,
Raged at her from a cavernous solitude,
Which, crimson-creeped, yawned the bristling curse
Murderous upon her ; how her steed waxed worse
And, snorting terror, fled unmanageable,
Pursued with fear, and flung her from the selle,
Soft slipping on a bank of springy moss
That couched her swooning. In an utter loss
Of mind and limbs she only knew twas thus—
As one who pants beneath an incubus :—
The boar thrust toward her a tusked snout and fanged
Of hideous bristles, and the whole wood clanged
And buzzed and boomed a thousand sounds and lights
Lawless about her brain, like leaves fierce nights

Of hurricane harvest shouting : then she knew
A fury thunder twixt it—and fleet flew
Rich-rooted moss and sandy loam that held
Dark-buried shadows of the wild, and swelled
Continual echoes with the thud of strife,
And breath of man and brute that warred for life ;
And all the air, made mad with foam and forms,
Spun froth and wrestled twixt her hair and arms,
While trampled caked the stricken leaves or shred
Hummed whirling, and snapped brittle branches dead.
And when she rose and leaned her throbbing head,
Which burst its uncoifed rays of raven hair
Down swelling shoulders pure and faultless fair,
On one milk, marvelous arm of fluid grace,
Beheld the brute thing throttled and the face
Of angry Urience over, browed like Might,
One red, swoln arm, that pinned the hairy fright,
Strong as a god's, iron at the gullet's brawn ;
Dug in his midriff, the close knees updrawn
Wedged deep the glutton sides that quaked and strove
A shaggy bulk, whose sharp hoofs horny drove.
Thus man and brute burned bent ; when Urience slipped
One arm, the horror's tearing tusks had ripped
And ribboned redly, to the dagger's hilt,
Which at his hip hung long a haft gold-gilt ;
Its rapid splinter drew ; beamed twice and thrice

High in the sun its ghastliness of ice,
Plunged—and the great boar, stretched in sullen death,
Weakened thro' wild veins, groaned laborious breath.

And how he brought her water from a well
That rustled freshness near them, as it fell
From its full-mantled urn, in his deep casque,
And prayed her quaff; then bathed her brow, a task
That had accompanying tears of joy and vows
Of love, sweet intercourse of eyes and brows,
And many clinging kisses eloquent.

And how, when dressed his arm, behind him bent
She clasped him on the same steed and they went
On thro' the gold wood toward the golden West,
Till on one low hill's forest-covered crest
Up in the gold his castle's battlements pressed.
And then she felt she'd loved him till had come
Fame of the love of Isoud, whom from home
Brought knightly Tristram o'er the Irish foam,
And Guenevere's for Launcelot of the Lake.
And then how passion from these seemed to wake
Longing for some great gallant who would slake--
And such found Accolon.

And then she thought
How far she'd fallen and how darkly fraught
With consequence was this. Then what distress

Were hers and his—her lover's; and success
How doubly difficult if Arthur slain,
King Urience lived to assert his right to reign.
So paused she pondering on the blade; her lips
Breathless and close as close cold finger tips
Hugged the huge weapon's hilt. And so she sighed,
" Nay ! long, too long hast lived who shouldst have died
Even in the womb abortive ! who these years
Hast leashed sweet life to care with stinging tears,
A knot thus harshly severed !—As thou art
Into the elements naked !"

O'er his heart
The long sword hesitated, lean as crime,
Descended redly once. And like a rhyme
Of nice words fairly fitted forming on,—
A sudden ceasing and the harmony gone,
So ran to death the life of Urience,
A strong song incomplete of broken sense.
There glowered the crimeful Queen. The glistening sword
Unfleshed, flung by her wronged and murdered lord ;
And the dark blood spread broader thro' the sheet
To drip a horror at impassive feet
And blur the polished oak. But lofty she
Stood proud, relentless; in her ecstacy
A lovely devil; a crowned lust that cried
On Accolon; that harlot which defied

Heaven with a voice of pulses clamorous as
Steep storm that down a cavernous mountain pass
Blasphemes an hundred echoes; with like power
The inner harlot called its paramour:
Him whom King Arthur had commanded, when
Borne from the lists, be granted her again
As his blithe gift and welcome from that joust,
For treacherous love and her adulterous lust.
And while she stood revolving how her deed's
Concealment were secured,—a grind of steeds,
Arms, jingling stirrups, voices loud that cursed
Fierce in the northern court. To her athirst
For him her lover, war and power it spoke,
Him victor and so King; and then awoke
A yearning to behold, to quit the dead.
So a wild specter down wide stairs she fled,
Burst on a glare of links and glittering mail,
That shrunk her eyes and made her senses quail.
To her a bulk of iron, bearded fierce,
Down from a steaming steed into her ears,
“This from the King, a boon!” laughed harsh and hoarse;
Two henchmen beckoned, who pitched sheer with force,
Loud clanging at her feet, hacked, hewn and red,
Crusted with blood a knight in armor—dead;
Even Accolon, tossed with the mocking scoff
“This from the King!”—phantoms in fog rode off.

And what remains? From Camelot to Gore
That night she weeping fled; then to the shore,—
As that romancer tells,—Avilion,
Where she hath Majesty gold-crowned yet wan;
In darkest cypress a frail pitious face
Queenly and lovely; 'round sad eyes the trace
Of immemorial tears as for some crime:
They future fixed, expectant of the time
When the forgiving Arthur cometh and
Shall have to rule all that lost golden land
That drifts vague amber in forgotten seas
Of surgeless turquoise dim with mysteries.
And so was seen Morgana nevermore,
Save once when from the Cornwall coast she bore
The wounded Arthur from that last fought fight
Of Camlan in a black barge into night.
But oft some see her with a palfried band
Of serge-stoled maidens thro' the drowsy land
Of Autumn glimmer; when are sharply strewn
The red leaves, while broad in the east a moon
Swings full of frost a lustrous globe of gleams,
Faint on the mooning hills as shapes in dreams.

DER FREISCHUTZ.

*Es gibt im Menschenleben Augenblicke,
Wo er dem Weltgeist näher ist als sonst.—SCHILLER.*

HE? why, a tall Franconian strong and young,
Brown as a walnut the first frost hath hulled ;
A soul of full endeavor powerful
Bound in lithe limbs, knit into grace and strength
Of bronze-like muscles elegant, that poised
A head like Hope's ; and then the manly lines
Of face developed by action and mobile
To each suggestive impulse of the mind,
Of smiles of buoyancy or scowls of gloom.—
And what deep eyes were his !—Aye ; I can see
Their wild and restless disks of luminous night
Instinct with haughtiness that sneered at Fate,
Glared cold conclusion to all circumstance,
As with loud law, to his advantage swift :
With scorn derisive that shot out a barb,
Stabbed Superstition to its dagger hilt ;
That smiled a thrust-like smile which curled the lip,
A vicious heresy with incredible lore,

When God's or holy Mary's name came forth
Exclaimed in reverence or astonishment;
And then would say,

“What is this God you mouth,
Employ whose name to sanctify and damn?—
A benedictive curse?—’T hath past my skill
Of grave interpretation. And your faith—
Distinguishment unseen, design unlawed.
For earth, air, fire or water or keen cold,
Hints no existence of such, worships not,
Such as men’s minds profess. Rather, meseems,
Throned have they one such as their hopes have wrought
In hope there may prove such an one in death
For Paradise or punishment. I hold
He juster were and would be kinglier kind
In sovereign mercy and a prodigal—
Not to few favored heads who, crowned with state,
Rule sceptered Infamies—of indulgence free
To all that burn luxuriant incense on
Shrines while they prayer him love’s obedience.
Are all not children of the same weak mold?
Clay of His Adam-modeled clay made quick?
Endowed with the like hopes, loves, fears and hates,
Our mother’s weaknesses? And these, forsooth,
These little crowns that lord it o’er His world,
Tricked up with imitative majesty,

God-countenanced arrogances, throned may still
Cry, 'crawl and worship, for we are as gods
Through God! great gods incarnate of his kind!'
—Omnipotent Wrong-representatives!
With might that blasts the world with wars and wrings
Groans from pale Nations with hell's tyranny.
So to my mind real monarch only he—
Your Satan cramped in Hell!—aye, by the fiend!
To pygmy Earth's frail tinsel majesties,
That ape a God in a sonorous Heaven.
Grant me the Devil in all mercy then,
For I will none of such! a fiend for friend
While Earth is of the earth; and afterward—
Nay! ransack not To-morrow till To-day,
If all that's joy engulf you when it is."

And laughed an oily laugh of easy jest
To bow out God and hand the Devil in.—
I met him here at Ammendorf one Spring,
Toward the close of April when the Harz,
Veined to their ruin-crested summits, pulsed
A fluid life of green and budded gold
Beneath pure breathing skies of boundless blue:
Where low-yoked oxen, yellow to the knees,
Along the fluted meadow, freshly ploughed,
Plodded and snuffed the fragrance of the soil,
The free bird sang exultant in the sun.

Triumphant Spring with hinted hopes of May
And jaunty June, her mouth a puckered rose.
Here at this very hostelry o' The Owl ;
Mine host there sleek served cannikins of wine
Beneath that elm now touseled by that shrew,
Lean Winter. Well!—a lordly vintage that!
With tang of fires which had sucked out their soul
From feverish sun-vats, cooled it from the moon's ;
From wine-skin bellies of the bursting grape
Trodden, in darkness of old cellars aged
Even to the tingling smack of olden earth.
Rich! I remember!—wine that spurred the blood—
Thou hast none such, I swear, nor wilt again!—
That brought the heart loud to the generous mouth,
And made the eyes unlatticed casements whence
The good man's soul laughed interested out.
Stoups of rare royal Rhenish, such they say
As Necromance hides guarded in vast casks
Of antique make far in the Kyffhäuser,
The Cellar of the Knights near Sittendorf.

So, mellowed by that wine to friendship frank,
He spake me his intent in coming here ;
But not one word of what his parentage ;
But this his name was, Rudolf, and his home,
Franconia ; but nor why he left nor when :
His mind to live a forester and be

Enfellowed in the Duke of Brunswick's train
Of buff and green; and so to his estate
Even now was bound, a youth of twenty-three.
And when he ceased the fire in his eyes
Worked restless as a troubled animal's,
Which hate-enraged can burn a steady flame,
Brute merciless. And thus I mused with me,
When he had ceased to fulminate at state,
"Another Count von Hackelnburg the fiend
Hath tricked unto the chase!—for hounds from Hell?"
But answered nothing, save light words of cheer
As best become fleet friends warm wine doth make.

Then as it chanced, old Kurt had come that morn
With some six of his jerkined foresters
From the Thuringian forest; damp with dew;
Red-cheeked as morn with early travel; bound
For Brunswick, Dummburg and the Hakel passed.
Chief huntsman he then to the goodly Duke,
And father of the sunniest maiden here
In Ammendorf, the blameless Ilsabe;
Who, motherless, the white-haired father prized
A jewel priceless. As huge barons' ghosts
Guard big, accumulated hoards of wealth,
Fast-sealed in caverned cellars, robber wells,
Beneath the dungeoned Dummburg, so he watched
Her, all his world in her who was his wealth.

A second Lora of Thuringia she.
Faultless for love, instilled all souls with love,
Who, in the favor of her maiden smile,
Felt friendship grow up like a golden thought ;
A life of love from words ; and light that fell
And wrought calm influence from her pure blue eyes.
Hair sedate and austere dressed o'er brows
White as a Harz dove's wing ; hair with the hue
Of twilight mists the sun hath soaked with gold.
A Tyrolean melody that brought
Dim dreams of Alpine heights, of shepherds brown,
Goat-skinned, with healthy cheeks and wrinkled lips
That fill wild oaten pipes on wand'ring ways,
Embowered deep, with mountain melodies,—
Simple with love and plaintive even to tears,—
Her presence, her sweet presence like a song.
And when she left, it was as when one hath
Beheld a moonlit Undine, ere the mind
Adjusts one thought, cleave thro' the glassy Rhine
A glittering beauty wet, and gone again
A flash—the soul drifts wondering on in dreams.
Some thirty years agone is that ; and I,
Commissioner of the Duke—no sinecure
I can assure you—had scarce reached the age
Of thirty (then some three years of that House).
Thro' me the bold Franconian, whom at first,

By bitter principles and scorn of state—
Developed into argument thro' wine—
The foresthood like was to be denied,
Was then enfellowed. “Yes,” I said, “he’s young ;
True, rashly young ! yet, see : a wiry frame,
A chamois’ footing, and a face for right ;
An eye which likes me not, but quick with pride,
And aimed at thought, a butt it may not miss :
A soul with virgin virtues which crude flesh
Makes seem but vices, these but God may see—
Develop these. But, if there’s aught of worth,
Body or mind, in him, Kurt, thou wilt know,
And to the surface wear, as divers win
From hideous ooze and life rich jewels lost
Of polished pureness, worthless left to night,
Thou or thy daughter, and inspire for good.”

A year thereafter was it that I heard
Of Rudolf’s passion for Kurt’s Ilsabe,
Then their betrothal. And it was from this,—
For, ah, that Ilsabe ! that Ilsabe !—
Good Mary Mother ! how she haunts me yet !
She, that true touchstone which philosophers feign
Contacts and golds all base ; a woman who
Could touch all evil into good in man.—
Surmised I of the excellency which

Refinement of her gentle company,
Warm presence of chaste beauty, had resolved
His fiery nature to, conditioning slave.
And so I came from Brunswick—as you know—
Is custom of the Duke or, by his seal
Commissioned proxy, his commissioner,—
To test the marksmanship of Rudolf who
Succeeded Kurt with marriage of his child,
An heir of Kuno.—He?—Great grandfather
Of Kurt, and one this forestkeepership
Was first possessor of; established thus—
Or such the tale they told me 'round the hearths.

Kuno, once in the Knight of Wippach's train,
Rode on a grand hunt with the Duke, who came
With vast magnificence of knights and hounds,
And satin-tuniced nobles curled and plumed
To hunt Thuringian deer. Then Morn too slow
On her blithe feet was; quick with laughing eyes
To morrow mortal eyes and lazy limbs;
Rather on tip-toed hills recumbent yawned,
Aroused an hour too soon; ashamed, disrobed,
Rubbed the stiff sleep from eyes that still would close,
While brayed the hollow horns and bayed lean hounds,
And cheered gallants until the dingles dinned,
Where searched the climbing mists or, compact light,
Fled breathless white, clung scared a moted gray,
Low unsunned cloudlands of the castled hills.

And then near mid-noon from a swarthy brake
The ban-dogs roused a red gigantic stag,
Lashed to whose back with grinding knotted cords,
Borne with whom like a nightmare's incubus,
A man shrieked; burry-bearded and his hair
Kinked with dry, tangled burrs, and he himself
Emaciated and half naked. From
The wear of wildest passage thro' the wild,
Rent red by briars, torn and bruised by rocks.

—For, such the law then, when the peasant chased
Or slew the dun deer of his tyrant lords,
As punishment the torturing withes and spine
Of some big stag, a gift of game and wild
Enough till death—death in the antlered herd
Or crawling famine in bleak, haggard haunts.
Then was the dark Duke glad, and forthwith cried
To all his dewy train a rich reward
For him who slew the stag and saved the man,
But death to him who slew the man and stag,
The careless error of a loose attempt.

So crashed the hunt along wild, glimmering ways
Thro' creepers and vast brush beneath gnarled trees,
Up a scorched torrent's bed. Yet still refused
Each that sure shot; the risk too desperate
The poor life and the golden gift beside.
So this young Kuno with two eyes wherein

Hunt with excitement kindled reckless fire
Clamored, "And are ye cowards?—Good your grace,
You shall not chase!—The fiend direct my ball!"
And fired into a covert deeply packed,
An intertwined wall of matted night,
Wherein the eye might vainly strive and strive
To pierce one foot or earn one point beyond.
But, ha! the huge stag staggered from the brake
Heart-hit and perished. That wan wretch unhurt
Soon bondless lay condoled. But the great Duke,
Charmed with the eagle shot, admired the youth,
There to him and his heirs forever gave
The forest keepership.

But envious tongues
Were soon at wag; and whispered went the tale
Of how the shot was free, and that the balls
Used by young Kuno were free bullets, which
Molded were cast in influence of the fiend
By magic and directed by the fiend.
Of some effect these tales were and some force
Had with the Duke, who lent an ear so far
As to ordain Kuno's descendants all
To proof of skill ere their succession to
The father's office. Kurt himself hath shot
The silver ring from out the popinjay's beak—
A good shot he, you see, who would succeed.

The Devil guards his mysteries close as God.
For who can say what elementaries
Demonic lurk in desolate dells and woods
Shadowy ? malicious vassals of that power
Who signs himself, thro' these, a slave to those,
Those mortals who act open with his Hell,
Those only who seek secretly and woo.

Of these free, fatal bullets let me speak :
There may be such ; our Earth hath things as strange ;
Then only in coarse fancies may exist ;
For fancy is among our peasantry
A limber juggler with the weird and dark ;
For Superstition hides not her grim face,
A skeleton grin on leprous ghastliness,
From Ignorance's mossy thatches low.

A cross-way, as I heard, among gaunt hills,
A solitude convulsed of rocks and trees
Blasted ; and on the stony cross-road drawn
A bloody circle with a bloody sword ;
Herein rude characters ; a skull and thighs
Fantastic fixed before a fitful fire
Of spiteful coals. Eleven of the clock
Cast, the first bullet leaves the mold,—the lead
Mixed with three bullets that have hit their mark,
Burnt blood,—the wounded Sacramental Host,
Unswallowed and unhallowed, oozed when shot

Fixed to a riven pine.—Ere twelve o'clock,
When dwindling specters in their rotting shrouds
Quit musty tombs to mumble hollow woes
In Midnight's horrified ear, with never a cry,
Word or weak whisper, till that hour sound,
Must the free balls be cast; and these shall be
In number three and sixty; three of which
Semial—he the Devil's minister—
Claims for his master and stamps as his own
To hit awry their mark, askew for harm.
Those other sixty shall not miss their mark.

No cry, no word, no whisper, tho' there gibe
Most monstrous shapes that flicker in thick mist
Lewd human countenances or leer out
Swoln animal faces with fair forms of men,
While wide-winged owls fan the drear, dying coals,
That lick thin, slender tongues of purple fire
From viperous red, and croaks the night-hawk near.
No cry, no word, no whisper should there come
Weeping a wandering form with weary, white
And pleading countenance of her you love,
Faded with tears of waiting; beckoning
With gray, large arms or censuring; her shame
In dull and desolate eyes; who, if you speak
Or stagger from that circle—hideous change!—
Shrinks, faced a hag of million wrinkles, which

Ridge scaly sharpness of protruding bones,
To rip you limb from limb with taloned claws.
Nor be deceived if some far midnight bell
Boom that anticipated hour, nor leave
By one short inch the bloody orbit, for
The minion varlets of Hell's majesty
Expectant cirque its dim circumference.
But when the hour of midnight smites, be sure
You have your bullets, neither more nor less ;
For, if thro' fear one more or less you have,
Your soul is forfeit to those agencies,
Right rathe who are to rend it from the flesh.
And while that hour of midnight sounds a din
Of hurrying hoofs and shouting outriders—
Six snorting steeds postilioned roll a stage
Black and with groaning wheels of spinning fire,
" Room there !—ho ! ho !—who bars the mountain-way !
On over him !"—but fear not nor fare forth,—
'Tis but the last trick of your bounden slave :
And ere the red moon strives from dingy clouds
And dives again, high the huge leaders leap
Iron fore-hoofs flashing and big eyes like gledes,
And, spun a spiral spark into the night,
Whistling the phantom flies and fades away.
Some say there comes no stage, but Hackelnburg,
Wild Huntsman of the Harz, rides hoarse in storm,

Dashing the dead leaves with dark dogs of hell
Direful thro' whirling thickets, and his horn
Croaks doleful as an owl's hoot while he hurls
Straight 'neath rain-streaming skies of echoes, sheer
Plunging the magic circle horse and hounds.
And then will come, platonian clad and slim,
Upon a stallion vast intensely black,
Semial, Satan's lurid minister,
To hail you and inform you and assure.—

Enough! these wives-tales heard to what I've seen;
To Ammendorf I came; and Rudolf there
With Kurt and all his picturesque foresters
Met me. And then the rounding year was ripe;
Throbbing the red heart of full Autumn: When
Each morning gleams crisp frost on shriveled fields;
Each noon sits veiled in mysteries of mist;
Each night unrolls a miracle woof of stars,
Where moon—bare-bosomed goddess of the hunt—
Wades calm, crushed clouds or treads the vaster blue.
Then I proposed the season's hunt; till eve
The test of Rudolf's skill postponed, with which
Annoyed he seemed. And so it was I heard
How he an execrable marksman was,
And whispered tales of near, incredible shots
That wryed their mark, while in his flint-lock's pan
Flashed often harmless powder, while wild game

Stared fearless on him and indulgent stood,
An open butt to such wide marksmanship.

Howbeit, he that day acquitted him
Of these maligners' cavils; in the hunt
Missing no shot however rash he made
Or distant thro' thick intercepting trees;
And the piled, curious game brought down of all
Good marksmen of that train had not sufficed,
Doubled, nay, trebled, to have matched his heap.
And wonderstruck the *jägers* saw, nor knew
How to excuse them. My indulgence giv'n,
Still swore that only yesterday old Kurt
Had touched his daughter's tears and Rudolf's wrath
By vowing end to their betrothéd love,
Unless that love developed better aim
Against the morrow's test; his ancestor's
High fame should not be damaged. So he stormed,
But bowed his gray head and wept silently;
Then looking up forgave when big he saw
Tears in his daughter's eyes and Rudolf gone
Forth in the night that wailed with coming storm.

Before this inn, The Owl, assembled came
The nice-primped villagers to view the trial:
Fair *fräuleins* and blonde, comely, healthy *frau*s;
Stout burgers. And among them I did mark
Kurt and his daughter. He, a florid face

Of pride and joy for Rudolf's strange success ;
She, radiant and flounced in flowing garb
Of bridal white deep-draped and crowned with flowers ;
For Kurt insisted this their marriage eve
Should Rudolf come successful from the chase.

So pleased was I with what I'd seen him do,
The test of skill superfluous seemed and so
Was on the bare brink of announcement, when,
Out of the evening heaven's hardening red,
Like a white warning loosed for augury,
A word of God some fallen angel prized
As his last all of heaven, penitent,
Hell-freed, sent minister to save a soul,
A wild dove clove the luminous winds and there,
A wafted waif, pruned settled on a bough :
Then I, " Thy weapon, Rudolph, pierce its head!"
Cried pointing, " And chief-forester art thou!"
Pale as a mist and wavering he turned ;
" I had a dream—" then faltered as he aimed,
" A woman's whim!" But starting from the press
Screamed Ilsabe, " My dove!" to plead its life
Came—cracked the rifle and untouched the dove
Rose beating lustrous wings, but Ilsabe—
" God's wrath! the sight!"—fell smitten, and the blood
Sprang red from shattered brow and silent hair—
That bullet strangely thro' her brow and brain. . . .

And what of Rudolf? ah! of him you ask?
That proud Franconian who would scoff at Fate
And scorn all state; who cried black Satan friend
Sooner than our white Christ;—why, he went mad
O' the moment, and into the haunted Harz
Fled, an unholy thing, and perished there
The prey of demons of the Dummburg. But
I one of few less superstitious who
Say, as the finale of a madman's deed,
He in the Bodé, from that ragged rock,
The Devil's Dancing Place, did leap and die.

TO REVERY.

WHAT ogive gates from gold of Ophir wrought,
What walls of bastioned Parian, lucid rose,
What marts of crystal, for the eyes of Thought
Hast builded on what Islands of Repose !
Vague onyx columns ranked Corinthian,
Or piled Ionic, colonnading heights
That loom above long burst of mythic seas :
Vast gynaeceums of carnelian ;
Micaceous temples, far marmorean flights,
Where winds the arabesque and plastique frieze.

Where bulbous domes of coruscating ore
Cloud-like convulsive sunsets--lands that dream,
Myrrh-fragrant, over siren seas and hoar,
Dashed with stiff, breezy foam of ocean's stream.
Tempestuous architecture-revelries ;
Built melodies of marble or clear glass ;
Effulgent sculptures chiseled out of thought
In misty attitudes, whose majesties
Feed full the pleasure as those beauties pass
To pale extinctions which are beauty fraught.

On rebeck and on rose in plinths of spars,
 On glimmering solitudes of flower and stone,
 A twilight-glow swoons settled, burned with stars,
 Deep violet dusk developing nor done.

Where float fair nacreous shapes like deities,—
 Existences of glory musical,— [gold,
 'Round whose warm hair twist fillets' coiling
 Their limbs Olympian lovely, and their eyes
 Dark oblique fervors; and most languorous tall
 In woven white with girdling gold threefold.

There darkling the consummate vintage sleeps,—
 Lethe-nepenthes for Earth-agony,—
 In sealéd amphorae some Sybil keeps,
 World-old, forever cellared secretly.

A wine of Xeres or of Syracuse?
 A fierce Falernian?—Ah! no vile Sabine!—
 A stol'n ambrosia of what olden god?
 Whose bubbled rubies maiden feet did bruise
 From crusted vats of vintage rich, I ween,
 Vivacious purple of some Samian sod.

Oh, for the cold conclusion of one draught!
 Elysian ecstacy of classic earth!— [laughed
 Where heroes warred with gods and where gods
 In eyes of mortal brown, a lusty mirth

Of deity delirious with desire :

Where danced the sacrifice to hornéd shrines,

And splashed the full libation blue as blood.—

Oh, to be drunk with dreaming ! to inspire

The very soul of beauty whence it shines

Too lost for utterance yet understood !

In cogitation of what verdurous shades,

Dull-droning quietudes where wild-bees lolled

Suck, lulled in pulpy lilies of the glades,

Barbaric-smothered with the kerneled gold :

Teased by some torso of the golden age,

Nude breasts of Cytherea, famous fair,

Uncestus'd, yet suggestive of what loves

Immortal ! yearn enamoured ; or to rage

With sun-burnt Poesy whose throat breathes bare

O'er leopard skins and flute among her groves.

LATE OCTOBER.

AH, haughty hills, sardonic solitudes,
What wizard touch hath, crowning you with gold,
Cast Tyrian purple o'er broad-shouldered woods,
And to your pride anointed empire sold
For wan traditioned death, whose misty moods
Shake each huge throne of quarried shadows cold ?

Now where the agate-foliaged forests sleep,
Bleak briars are ruby-berried, and the brush
Flames—when the winds armsful of motion heap
In wincing gusts upon it—amber blush ;
The beech an inner beryle breaks from deep
Encrusting topaz of a sullen flush.

Dead gold, dead bronze, dull amethystine rose,
Rose cameo, in day's gray, somber spar
Of smoky quartz—intaglioed beauty—glows
Luxuriance of color. Trunks that are
Vast organs antheming the winds' wild woes
A faded sun and pale night's paler star.

Bulged from its cup the dark-brown acorn falls,
And by its gnarly saucer in the streams
Swells plumped ; and here the spiky spruce-gum balls
Rust maces of an ouphen host that dreams ;
Beneath the chestnut the split burry hulls
Disgorge fat purses of sleek satin gleams.

Burst silver white, nods an exploded husk
Of snowy, woolly smoke the milk-weed's puff
Along the orchard's fence, where in the dusk
And ashen weeds,—as some grim Satyr's rough
Red, breezy cheeks burn thro' his beard,—the brusque
Crab apples laugh, wind-tumbled from above.

Runs thro' the wasted leaves the crickets' click,
Which saddest coignes of Melancholy cheers ;
One bird unto the sumach flits to pick
Red, sour seeds ; and thro' the woods one hears
The drop of gummy walnuts ; the railed rick
Looms tawny in the field where low the steers.

Some slim bud-bound Leimoniad hath flocked,
The birds to Echo's shores, where flossy foams
Boom low long cream-white cliffs.—Where once buzzed
Unmillioned bees within unmillioned blooms, [rocked
One hairy hummer cramps one bloom, frost mocked,—
A miser whose rich hives squeeze oozing combs.

Twist some lithe maple and right suddenly
A leafy storm of stars about you breaks—
Some Hamadryad's tears: Unto her knee
Wading the Naiad clears her brook that streaks
Thro' wadded waifs: Hark! Pan for Helike
Flutes melancholy by the minty creeks.

AN ANEMONE.

“ **T**EACH me the wisdom of thy beauty, pray,
That, being thus wise, I may aspire to see
What beauty is, whence, why, and in what way
Immortal, yet how mortal utterly :
For, shrinking loveliness, thy brow of day
Pleads plaintive as a prayer, **a**nemone.

“ Teach me wood-wisdom, I am petulant :
Thou hast the wildness of a Dryad’s eyes,
The shyness of an Oread’s, wild plant :—
Behold the bashful goddess where she lies
Distinctly delicate !—inhabitant
Ambrosial-earthed, star-cousin of the skies.

“ Teach me thy wisdom, for, thro’ knowing, yet,
When I have drunk dull Lethe till each vein
Thuds full oblivion, I shall not forget ;—
For beauty known is beauty ; to sustain
Glad memories with life, while mad regret
And sorrow perish, being Lethe slain.”

“ Teach thee my beauty being beautiful
And beauty wise?—My slight perfections, whole
As world, as man, in their creation full
As old a Power’s cogitation roll.
Teach thee?—Presumption! thought is young and dull—
Question thy God what God is, soul what soul.”

THE RAIN-CROW.

THEE freckled August, dozing hot and blonde
Oft 'neath a wheat-stack in the white-topped mead—
In her full hair brown ox-eyed daisies wound—
O water-gurgler, lends a sleepy heed:
Half-lidded eyes a purple iron-weed
Blows slimly o'er; beyond, a path-found pond [grasses,
Basks flint-bright, hedged with pink-plumed pepper—
A coigne for vainest dragonflies, which glasses
Their blue in diamond.

Oft from some dusty locust, that thick weaves
With crescent pulse-pods its thin foliage gray,
Thou,—o'er the shambling iane, which past the sheaves
Of sun-tanned oats winds, red with rutty clay,
One league of rude rail-fence,—some panting day,
When each parched meadow quivering vapor grieves,
Nature's Astrologist, dost promise rain,
In seeping language of the thirsty plain,
Cool from the burning leaves.

And, in good faith, aye ! best of faith, art true ;
And welcome that rune-chuckled forecasting,
When up the faded fierceness of scorched blue
Strong water-carrier winds big buckets bring,
Black with stored freshness : how their dippers ring
And flash and rattle ! lavishing large dew
On tall, good-humored corn that, streaming wet,
Laughs long ; while woods and leas, shut in a net
Of mist, dream vague in view.

And thou, safe-houséd in some pawpaw bower
Of close, broad, gold-green leaves, contented art
In thy prediction, fall'n within the hour ;
While fuss the brown bees hiveward from the heart
Of honey-filtering bloom ; beneath the cart
Droop pompous barnyard cocks damped by the shower :
And deep-eyed August, bonnetless, a beech
Hugs in disheveled beauty, safe from reach
On starry moss and flower.

LOVELINESS.

I.

WHEN I fare forth to kiss the eyes of Spring,
On ways, which arch gold sunbeams and pearl
Embraced, two whispers we search—wandering [buds,
By goblin forests and by girlish floods
Deep in the hermit-holy solitudes—
For stalwart Dryads romping in a ring ;
Firm limbs an oak-bark-brown, and hair—wild woods
Have perfumed—loops of radiance ; and they,
Most coyly pleasant, as we linger by,
Pout dimpled cheeks, more rose than rosiest sky,
Honeyed ; and us good-hearted laughter fling
Like far-out reefs that flute melodious spray.

II.

Then we surprise each Naiad ere she slips—
Nude at her toilette—in her fountain's glass,
With damp locks dewy, and large godlike hips
Cool-glittering ; but discovered, when—alas !
From green, indented moss and plushy grass,—

Her great eyes' pansy-black reproaching,—dips
She white the cloven waters ere we pass :
And a broad, orbing ripple makes to hide
From our desirous gaze provoked what path
She gleaming took ; what haunt she bashful hath
In minnowy freshness, where her murmurous lips
Bubbling make merry 'neath the rocky tide.

III.

Oft do we meet the Oread whose eyes
Are dew-drops where twin heavens shine confessed ;
She, all the maiden modesty's surprise
Blushing her temples,—to deep loins and breast
Tempestuous, brown bewildering tresses pressed,—
Stands one scared moment's moiety, in wise
Of some delicious dream, then shrinks distressed,
Like some weak wind that, haply heard, is gone,
In rapport with shy Silence to make sound ;
So, like storm sunlight, bares clean limbs to bound
A thistle's flashing to a woody rise,
A graceful glimmer up the ferny lawn.

IV.

Hear Satyrs and Sylvanus in sad shades
Of dozy dells pipe : Pan and Fauns hark dance
With rattling hoofs dim in low, mottled glades :
Hidden in spice-bush-bowered banks, perchance,
Mark Slyness waiting with an animal glance

The advent of some Innocence, who wades
Thro' thigh-deep flowers, naked as Romance,
In braided shadows, when two hairy arms
Hug her unconscious beauty panting white;
Till tearful terror, struggling into might,
Beats the brute brow resisting; yields and fades,
Exhausted, to the grim Lust her rich charms.

THE LAST SCION OF THE HOUSE OF CLARE.

Year 13—

BARBICAN, bartizan, battlement,
With the Abergavenny mountains blent,
Look, from the Raglan tower of Gwent,
My lord Hugh Clifford's ancient home
Shows, clear morns of the Spring or Summer,
Thrust out like thin flakes o' a silver foam
From a climbing cloud, for the hills gloom glummer,
Being shaggy with heath, yon.—I was his page;
A favorite then; and he of that age
When a man will love and be loved again,
Or die in the wars or a monastery:
Or toil till he stifle his heart's hard pain,
Or drink, drug his hopes and his lost love bury.
I was his page; and often we fared
Thro' the Clare desmene in Autumn hawking—
If the baron had known how he would have glared
From their bushy brows eyes dark with mocking!

—That last of the Strongbows, Richard, I mean—
Had growled to his yeomen, “ A score! mount, Keene !
Forth and spit me this Clifford, or hang
With his crop-eared page to the closest oak!”
For he and the Cliffords had ever a fang
In the other’s side, . . . but I see him choke
And strangle with wrath when his hawker told—
If he told!—how we met on that flowery wold
His daughter, sweet Hortense of Clare, the day
Her hooded tiercel its brails did burst
To trail with its galling jesses away ;
An untrained haggard the falconer cursed,
Vain whistled to lure ; when the eyas sped
Slant, low and heavily overhead
By us ; and Sir Hugh,—who had just then cast
His peregrine fierce at a heron-quarry,—
In his stirrups rising, thus—as it passed,
By the jesses caught and to her did carry,
Lingering slender and tall by a rose
Whence she pulled the berries—But no two foes
Her eyes and Sir Hugh’s !—And I swear each felt
A song in their hearts!—For I heard him quaver
Somewhat and then—by Mary!—he knelt!—
And the Lady herself in her words did waver
And wonder with smiles. Then daintily took
The hawk on her fist where it pruned and shook

Its callowness ragged, as Hugh did seize
Softly the other hand long and white,—
Reached forth to him craving him rise from his knees,—
And mouthed with moist kisses an hundred quite.
Tho' she blushed up burning, no frowned " Beware!"
But seemed so happy! when crushing thro'—
Her sturdy retainer with swarthy stare—
The underwoods burst; and her maiden crew
Drew near them naming her name, and came
With leaves and dim Autumn blossoms aflame.—
" Their words?" I know not! for how should I?—
I paged my master but was no spy.
Nothings, I think, as all lovers', you know;
Yet how should I hear such whispered low,
Quick by the wasted woodland yellow?
When up thro' the brush thrashed that burly fellow
With his ale-coarse face, and so made a pause
In the pulse of their words, there my lord Sir Hugh
Stood with the soil on his knee: No cause
Had he—but his hanger he halfway drew—
Then paused, thrust it *clap* in its sheath again
And bowed to the Lady and strode away;
Up, vault, on his steed—and we rode amain
Gay to his towers that merry day.

He loved and was loved,—why, I knew!—for look,
All other sports for the chase he forsook;

To ride in the Raglan marches and hawk
And to hunt and to wander. And found a lair,
In the Strongbow forest, of bush and of rock,
Of moss and thick ferns; where Hortense of Clare,
How often I wis not, met him by chance—
Perhaps!—Sweet sorceress out of romance,
Those tomes of Geoffrey—for she was fair!
Her large, warm eyes and hair, . . . ah, hair,
How may one picture or liken it!
With the golden gloss of its full brown, fit
For the Viviane face of lovable white
Beneath;—like a star that a cloud of night
Stops over to threaten but never will drench
Its tremulous beauty with mists that quench.—

Heigho!—but they ceased, those meetings. I wot
Watched of the baron, his menial crew;
For she loved too well to have once forgot
The place and the time of their trysting true.
But she came not—ah! and again came not:
“*Why and when?*” would question Sir Hugh
In his labored scrawls a crevice of rock—
The lovers’ post—in its coigne would lock.
Until near Yule Love gat them again
A twilight tryst—by frowardness sure.—
They met. And that day was gray with rain—

Or snow, and the wind did ever endure
A long, bleak moaning thorough the wood,
Smarted the cheek and chapped i' the blood;
And a burne in the forest cried "sob and sob,"
And whimpered forever a chopping throb
Thro' the rope-taunt boughs like a thing pursued.
—And there it was that he learned how she
(My faith! how it makes me burn and quiver
To think what a miserable despot he—
Lord Richard Strongbow, aye and ever
To his daughter was!) forsooth! must wed
With an Eastern Earl—some Lovell: one whom
(That God in His mercy had smote him dead!)
Hortense of Clare—but in baby bloom—
Never had mirrored with maiden eyes.
Sealed over a baby to strengthen some ties—
Of power or wealth—had been bartered then
And sold and purchased, and now . . . but when
To her lover, the Clifford, she told this—there
He had faced with his love the talons of Death—
Only for her, who did stay with a stare
Of reproach all his heat and say in a breath,
" Is love, that thou swarè to me aye and so often,
To live too feeble or—how?—doth it soften
And weaken away and—to die?—why die?—
Live and be strong! and this is why."—

Her words are glued here so! I remember
All as well as that sullen December,
That blustered and bullied about them and
Spat stiff its spiteful and cold-cutting snow
Where they talked there dreamily hand in hand,
While the rubbing boughs clashed rattling low.
Her last words these, “By curfew sure
On Christmas eve at the postern door.”

And we were there, and a void horse too :
Armed: for a journey I hardly knew
Whither, but why you well can guess.
I could have uttered a certain name—
Our comrade’s sure—of what loveliness !
Waited with love, impatience aflame.
While Raglan bulged its baronial girth
To roar to its battlements Yule and song ;
Retainers loud rollicked in wassail and mirth
Where the mistletoe ’round the vast hearths hung,
And holly beberried the elden wall
Of curious oak in the banqueting hall.
And the spits, I trow, by the scullions turned
O’er the snoring logs, rich steamed and burned
With flesh ; where the whole wild-boar was roasted
And the dun-deer flanks and the roebuck haunches ;
Fat tuns of ale, that the cellars boasted,

Old casks of wine were broached for paunches
Of the vassals that reveled in bower and stall;
Pale pages who diced and bluff henchmen who quarr'led
Or swore in their cups, while lean mastiffs all,
O'er bones of the feast in their kennels snarled;
For Hortense—drink! drink!—by the Virgin's leave,
Were wed to this Lovell this Christmas Eve.

“Was she long—Did she come?” By that post-
ern we

Like shadows lurked. Said my lord Sir Hugh:
“Yon tower, remember!—that casement, see!—
When a stealthy light in its slit burns blue
And signals thrice slowly, thus—'tis she.”
And about his person his gaberdine drew,
For the wind it hugged and the snow beat thro'.
Did she come?—We had watched for an hour or twain
Ere that light burned there in the central pane
And was flourished thrice and departed so.
Then closer we packed to the postern portal
Horses and all in the stinging snow.
Stiff with the cold was I.—Immortal
Minutes we waited breath-bated and listened
Shuddering there in the gusty gale.
Whizzing o'er parapets sifted and glistened
Wild drift, thro' battlements hissed in ~~the~~ veil.

Quoth my lord Sir Hugh, for his love was a-heat,
"She feels for the spring in the hidden panel
'Neath the tapestry . . . ah! thou hast pressed it, sweet!
—How black gulps open the secret channel!
Now cautiously step, and thy bridal garb
Swirled warm with a mantle o' fur. . . . she plants
One foot—then a pause—on the stair—So, Barb,
So!—If the tempest that barks and pants
Would throttle itself with its yelps! then I
Might hear but one footstep echo and sing
Down the ugly. . . . there! 'tis her fingers try
The massy bolts which the rust makes cling."
But ever some whim of the wind that shook
The clanging ring of a creaking hook
In the buttress or wall; and we waited so
Till the East grew gray. Did she come?—ah, no!

I must tell you why, and enough: 'Tis said
On the eve of the marriage she fled the side
Of the baron, the bridegroom too she fled,
With a mischievous laugh, "*I'll hide! I'll hide!*
Seek! and be sure to seek well!" and led
A wild chase after her, but defied
All search for—a score and ten more years,
And the laughter of Yule was changed to tears. [glare
But they searched and the snow was bleared with the

Of torches that hurried thro' chamber and stair;
And tower and court re-echoed her name,
But she laughed no answer and never came.

So over the channel to France with his King
And the Black Prince, sailed to the wars—to deaden
The ache of the mystery—Hugh that Spring,
And fell at Poitiers: for his loss lay leaden
On hope, and his life was a weary sadness,
So he flung it away with a very gladness.
And the baron died—and the bridegroom, well,—
Unlucky that bridegroom, sooth!—to tell
Of him there is nothing. The baron died;
The last of the Strongbows he, gramercy!
And the Clare estate with its wealth and its pride
Devolved to the Bloets, Walter or Percy.

Ten years and a score thereafter. And they
Ransacked the old castle and mark!—one day
In a lonesome tower uprummaged a chest
From Flanders, of sinister ebon, carved
Sardonic with masks 'round an olden crest,
Gargoyle faces distorted and starved:
Fast fixed with a spring which they forced and lo!
When they opened it—ha, Hortense!—or, no!—
Fantastic a skeleton jeweled and wreathed

With flowers of dust, and a minever
About it hugged, which quaint richness sheathed
Of a bridal raiment and lace with fur.

—I'd have given such years of my life—yes, well!—
As were left me then so her lover, Hugh,
For such time breathed as it took one to tell
How she forever, deemed false, was true!

He'd have known how it was, “For, you see, in groping
For the puny spring of that panel—hoping
And fearing as nearer and nearer grew
The boisterous scramble—why, out she blew
Her windy taper and quick—in this chest
Wary would lie for—a minute, mayhap,
Till the hurry all passed ; but the death-lock pressed
—Ere her heart was aware—with a hungry snap.”

ON THE JELlico-SPUR.

TO MY FRIEND, JOHN FOX, JR.

YOU remember, the deep mist,—
Climbing to the Devil's Den—
Blue beneath us in the glen
And above us amethyst,
Throbbed and circled and away
Thro' the wild-woods opposite,
Torn and shattered, morning-lit,
Scurried up a dewy gray.
Vague as in Romance we saw
From the fog one riven trunk,
Its huge horny talons shrunk,
Thrust a hungry dragon's claw.
And we climbed two hours thro'
The dawn-dripping Jellicoes,
To that wooded rock that shows
Undulating peaks of blue:
The vast Cumberlands that sleep,
Weighed with soaring forests, far
To the concave welkin's bar,

Leagues on leagues of purple sweep.
Range exalted over range
 Billowed their enormous spines,
 And we heard the priestly pines
Hum the wisdom of their change.
We were sons of Nature then ;
 She had taken us to her,
 Closer drawn by brier and burr,
There on lonely Devil's Den.
We were pupils of her moods :
 Taught the beauties of her loins
 In those bloom-anointed coignes,—
Love in her eternal woods :
 How she bore or flower or bud ;
 Pithed the wiry sapling-oak ;
 In the long vine zeal awoke
Aye to climb a leafy flood.
Her waste fantasies of birth :
 Sponge-like exudations fair—
 Dainty fungi everywhere
Bulging from the loamy earth.
Coral-vegetable things ;
 Crystals clamily exhaled ;
 Bulbous, marble-ribbed and scaled,
Vip'rous colored ; then close rings
Of the Indian Pipe that cleft

Pink and white the woodland lax,—
Blossoms of a natural wax
The brown mountain-fairies left.
We on that parched precipice,
 Stretched beneath the chestnuts' burrs,
 Breathed the balsam of the firs,
Felt the blue sky like a kiss.
Soft that heaven; stainless as
 The grand woodlands lunging on,
 Wound majestic in the sun,
Or as our devotion was!
Freedom sat there cragged we saw,
 Freedom whom hoarse forests sang;
 Heaven-browed her eyes, whence sprang
Audience august with law.
Wildernesses, from her hips
 Sprung the giant forests there,
 Tossed the cataracts from her hair,
Thunders lightened from her lips.
Oft some scavenger, with vane
 Motionless, above we knew
 Wheeled thro' altitudes of blue
By his rapid shadow's stain.
Or some cloud of sunny white,—
 Puffed a lazy drift of pearl,—
 Balmy breezes o'er would whirl

Shot with coruscating light.
So we dreamed an hour upon
Those warm rocks, dry, lichen-scabbed.
Lounged beneath long leaves that dabbed
At us coins of shade and sun.
Then arose and down some gorge
Made a bowldered torrent broad
The hurled pathway of our road
Tumbled down the mountain large.
At that farm-house, which you know,
Where old-fashioned flowers spun
Gay rag-carpets in the sun,
By green apple-boughs built low,
Rested from our hot descent;
One deep draught of cider cool,
Unctuous, our fierce veins to dull
At old Hix's eloquent. . . .
On Wolf Mountain died the light;
A colossal blossom, rayed
With rent petaled clouds that played
'Round a calyxed fury bright.
Down the moist mint-scented vale
To the mining camp we turned,
Thro' the twilight faint discerned
With its crowded cabins pale.
Ah! those nights!—We wandered forth

On some shadow-haunted path
When the moon was late and rathe
The large stars ; sowed south and north,
Clustered bursting heavens down :
And the milky zodiac,
Rolled athwart the belted black,
Myriad-million-moted shone.
And in dreams we sauntered till
In the valley pale beneath,
From a dew-drop's vapored breath
To faint ghosts, there gathered still,
Grave creations weird of mist :
Then we knew the moonrise near,
As with necromance the air
Pulsed to pearl and amethyst.
Shrilled the insects of the dusk,
Grated, buzzed and strident sung
Till each leaf seemed tuned and strung
For high Pixy music brusque.
Stealing steps and stealthy sighs
As of near unhallowed things,
Rustled hair or fluttered wings,
Seemed about us; then the eyes
Of plumed phantom warriors
Burned mesmeric from some bush
Mournful in the goblin hush,

Then materialized to stars.
Mantled mists like ambushed braves,
 Chiefed by some swart Blackfoot tall,
Stole along each forest wall—
Phosphorescent moony waves.
Then the moon rose; from some cup
 Each hill's bowl,—magnetic shine,
 Mist and silence poured like wine,—
Brimmed a monster goblet up.
Ingot from lost orient mines,
 Delved by humpbacked gnomes of Night,
 Full her orb loomed, nacreous white,
O'er Pine Mountain's druid pines.
As thro' fragmentary fleece
 Her circumference polished broke,
 Orey-seamed, about us woke
Myths of Italy and Greece.
Then—a chanson serenade—
 You, rich-voiced, to your guitar
 To our goddess in that star
Sang "*Ne Tempo*" from the glade.

SEÑORITA.

AN agate black thy roguish eyes
Claim no proud lineage of skies,
No velvet blue, but of sweet Earth,
Rude, reckless witchery and mirth.

Looped in thy raven hair's repose,
A hot aroma, one tame rose
Dies envious of that beauty where,—
By being near which,—it is fair.

Thy ears,—two dainty bits of song
Of unpretending charm, which wrong
Would jewels rich, whose restless fire
Courts coarse attention,—such inspire.

Slim hands, that crumple listless lace
About thy white breasts' swelling grace,
And falter at thy samite throat,
To such harmonious efforts float.

Seven stars stop o'er thy balcony
Cored in taunt heaven's canopy ;
No moon flows up the satin night
In pearl-pierced raiment spun of light.

From orange orchards dark in dew
Vague, odorous lips the West wind blew,
Or thou, a new Angelica
From Ariosto, breath'd'st Cathay.

Oh, stoop to me and speaking reach
My soul like song, that learned low speech
From some sad instrument, who knows?
Or bloom,—a dulcimer or rose.

LEANDER TO HERO.

I.

BROWS wan thro' blue-black tresses
Wet with sharp rain and kisses ;
Locks loose the sea-wind scatters,
Like torn wings fierce for flight ;
Cold brows, whose sadness flatters,
One kiss and then—good-night.

II.

Can this thy love undo me
When in the heavy waves ?
Nay ; it must make unto me
Their groaning backs but slaves !
For its magic doth indue me
With strength o'er all their graves.

III.

Weep not as heavy-hearted
Before I go ! For thou
Wilt follow as we parted—
A something hollow-hearted,

Dark eyes whence cold tears started,
Gray, ghostly arms out-darted
 To take me, even as now,
To drag me, their weak lover,
To caves where sirens hover,
Deep caves the dark waves cover,
 Down ! throat and hair and brow.

IV.

But in thy sleep shalt follow—
 Thy bosom fierce to mine,
Long arms wound warm and hollow,—
In sleep, in sleep shalt follow,—
 To save me from the brine ;
 Dim eyes on mine divine ;
 Deep breath at mine like wine ;
Sweet thou, with dream-soft kisses
 To dream me onward home,
White in white foam that hisses,
 Love's creature safe in foam.

V.

What, Hero, else for weeping
Than long, lost hours of sleeping
And vestal-vestured Dreams,
Where thy Leander stooping

Sighs ; no dead eyelids drooping ;
No harsh, hard looks accusing ;
No curls with ocean oozing ;
But then as now he seems,
 Sweet-favored as can make him
Thy smile, which is a might,
 A hope, a god to take him
Thro' all this hell of night.

VI.

Then where thy breasts are hollow
 One kiss ! one kiss ! I go !
Sweet soul ! a kiss to follow
Up whence thy breasts bud hollow,
Cheeks than wood-blossoms whiter,
Eyes than dark waters brighter
 Wherein the far stars glow.
Look lovely when I leave thee !—
 I go, my love, I go !
Look lovely, love, nor grieve thee,
 That I must leave thee so.

MUSAGETES.

FOR the mountains' hoarse greetings came hollow
From stormy wind-chasms and caves,
And I heard their wild cataracts wallow
 Huge bulks in long spasms of waves,
And that Demon said, "Lo! you must follow!
 And our path is o'er myriads of graves."

Then I felt that the black earth was porous
 And rotten with worms and with bones;
And I knew that the ground that now bore us
 Was cadaverous with Death's skeletons;
And I saw horrid eyes, heard sonorous
 And dolorous gnashings and groans.

But the night of the tempest and thunder,
 The might of the terrible skies,
And the fire of Hell that,—coiled under
 The hollow Earth,—smoulders and sighs,
And the laughter of stars and their wonder
 Mingled and mixed in its eyes.

And we clomb—and the moon old and sterile
 Clomb with us o'er torrent and scar!
And I yearned towards her oceans of beryl,
 Wan mountains and cities of spar—
“‘Tis not well,” that one said, “you’re in peril
 Of falling and failing your star.”

And we clomb—through a murmur of pinions,
 Thin rattle of talons and plumes;
And a sense as of Boreal dominions
 Clove down to the abysms and tombs;
And the Night’s naked, Ethiope minions
 Swarmed on us in legions of glooms.

And we clomb—till we stood at the portal
 Of the uttermost point of the peak,
And it led with a step more than mortal
 Far upward some presence to seek;
And I felt that this love was immortal,
 This love which had made me so weak.

We had clomb till the limbo of spirits
 Of darkness and crime deep below
Swung nebular; nor could we hear its
 Lost wailings and moanings of woe,—
For we stood in a realm that inherits
 A vanquishing virgin of snow.

THE QUARREL.

COULD I divine how her gray eyes
Gat such cold haughtiness of skies ;

How, some wood-flower's shadow brown,
Dimmed her fair forehead's wrath a frown ;

How, rippled sunshine blown thro' air,
Tossed scorn her eloquence of hair ;

How to a folded bud again
She drew her blossomed lips' disdain ;

Naught deigning save eyes' utterance,
Star-words, which quicker reach the sense ;

Then, afterwards, how melted there
The austere woman to one tear ;

Then were I wise to know how grew
This star-stained miracle of blue,
How God makes wild flowers out of dew.

THE MOOD O' THE EARTH.

MY heart is high, is high, my dear,
And the warm wind sunnily blows ;
My heart is high with a mood that's cheer,
And burns like a sun-blown rose.

My heart is high, is high, my dear,
And the Heaven's deep skies are blue ;
My heart is high as the passionate year,
And smiles like a bud in dew.

My heart, my heart is high, my sweet,
For wild is the smell o' the wood,
That gusts in the breeze with a pulse o' heat,
Mad heat that beats like a blood.

My heart, my heart is high, my sweet,
And the sense of summer is full ;
A sense of summer,—full fields of wheat,
Full forests and waters cool.

My heart is high, is high, my heart,
As the bee's that groans and swinks
In the dabbled flowers that dart and part
To his woolly bulk when he drinks.

My heart is high, is high, my heart,—
Oh, sing again, O good, gray bird,
That I may get that lilt by heart,
And fit each note with a word.

God's saints ! I tread the air, my dear !
Flow one with the running wind ;
And the stars that stare I swear, my dear,
Right soon in my hair I'll find.

To live high up a life of mist
With the white things in white skies,
With their limbs of pearl and of amethyst,
Who laugh blue humorous eyes !

Or to creep and to suck like an elfin thing
To the aching heart of a rose ;
In the harebell's ear to cling and swing
And whisper what no one knows !

To live on wild honey as fresh as thin
As the rain that's left in a flower,
And roll forth golden from feet to chin
In the god-flower's Danaë shower !

Or free, full-throated curve back the throat
With a vigorous look at the blue,
And sing right staunch with a lusty note
Like the hawk hurled where he flew !

God's life ! the blood of the Earth is mine !
And the mood of the Earth I'll take,
And brim my soul with her wonderful wine,
And sing till my heart doth break !

A GRAY DAY.

I.

LONG vollies of wind and of rain
And the rain on the drizzled pane,
And the eve falls chill and murk ;
But on yesterday's eve I know
How a horned moon's thorn-like bow
Stabbed rosy thro' gold and thro' glow,
Like a rich barbaric dirk.

II.

Now thick throats of the snapdragons,—
Who hold in their hues cool dawns,
Which a healthy yellow paints,—
Are filled with a sweet rain fine
Of a jaunty, jubilant shine,
A faery vat of rare wine,
Which the honey thinly taints.

III.

Now dabble the poppies shrink,
And the coxcomb and the pink ;
While the candytuft's damp crown
Droops dribbled, low bowed i' the wet ;
And long spikes o' the mignonette
Little musk-sacks open set,
Which the dripping o' dew drags down.

IV.

Stretched taunt on the blades of grass,
Like a gossamer-fibered glass,
Which the garden-spider spun,
The web, where the round rain clings
In its middle sagging, swings ;—
A hammock for Elfin things
When the stars succeed the sun.

V.

And mark, where the pale gourd grows
Up high as the clambering rose,
How that tiger-moth is pressed
To the wide leaf's underside.—
And I know where the red wasps hide,
And the wild bees,—who defied
The first strong gusts,—distressed.

VI.

Yet I feel that the gray will blow
Aside for an afterglow ;
And a breeze on a sudden toss
Drenched boughs to a pattering show'r
Athwart the red dusk in a glow'r,
Big drops heard hard on each flow'r
On the grass and the flowering moss.

VII.

And then for a minute, may be,—
A pearl—hollow worn—of the sea,—
A glimmer of moon will smile ;
Cool stars rinsed clean on the dusk,
A freshness of gathering musk
O'er the showery lawns, as brisk
As spice from an Indian isle.

CARMEN.

LA *Gitanilla!* tall dragoons
In Andalusian afternoons,
With ogling eye and compliment
Smiled on you, as along you went
Some sleepy street of old Seville ;
Twirled with a military skill
Moustaches ; buttoned uniforms
Of Spanish yellow bowed your charms.

Proud, wicked head and hair blue-black !
Whence your mantilla, half thrown back,
Discovered shoulders and bold breast
Bohemian brown : and you were dressed—
In some short skirt of gipsy red
Of smuggled stuff; thence stockings dead
White silk exposed with many a hole
Thro' which your plump legs roguish stole
A fleshly look : and tiny toes
In red morocco shoes with bows
Of scarlet ribbons. Daintily

You walked by me and I did see
Your oblique eyes, your sensuous lip,
That gnawed the rose you once did flip
At bashful Jose's nose while loud
Laughed the guant guards among the crowd.
And, in your brazen chemise thrust,
Heaved with the swelling of your bust,
That bunch of white acacia blooms
Whiffed past my nostrils hot perfumes.

As in a cool *neveria*
I ate an ice with Mérimée,
Dark Carmencita, you passed gay,
All holiday bedizenéd,
A new mantilla on your head ;
A crimson dress bespangled fierce ;
And crescent gold, hung in your ears,
Shone wrought Morisco ; and each shoe
Cordovan leather, spangled blue,
Glanced merriment ; and from large arms
To well-turned ancles all your charms
Blew flutterings and glitterings
Of satin bands and beaded strings ;
And 'round each arm's fair thigh one fold,
And graceful wrists, a twisted gold
Coiled serpents, tails fixed in the head,
Convulsive-jeweled glossy red.

In flowers and trimmings to the jar
Of mandolin and low guitar
You in the grated *patio*
Danced; the curled coxcombs' flirting row
Rang pleased applause. I saw you dance,
With wily motion and glad glance
Voluptuous, the wild *romalis*,
Where every movement was a kiss
Of elegance delicious, wound
In your Basque tambourine's dull sound.
Or as the ebon castanets
Clucked out dry time in unctuous jets,
Saw angry Jose thro' the grate
Glare on us a pale face of hate,
When some indecent colonel there
Presumed too lewdly for his ear.

Some still night in Seville ; the street,
Candilejo; two shadows meet—
Flash sabres; crossed within the moon,—
Clash rapidly—a dead dragoon.

DISENCHANTMENT OF DEATH.

HUSH! She is dead! Tread gently as the light
Foots dim the weary room. Thou shalt behold.
Look:—In death's ermine pomp of awful white,
Pale passion of pulseless slumber virgin cold:
Bold, beautiful youth proud as heroic Might—
Death! and how death hath made it vastly old.

Old earth she is now: energy of birth
Glad wings hath fledged and tried them suddenly;
The eyes that held have freed their narrow mirth;
Their sparks of spirit, which made this to be,
Shine fixed in rarer jewels not of earth,
Far Fairylands beyond some silent sea.

A sod is this whence what were once those eyes
Will grow blue wild-flowers in what happy air;
Some weed with flossy blossoms will surprise,
Haply, what summer with her affluent hair;
Blush roses bask those cheeks; and the wise skies
Will know her dryad to what young oak fair.

The chastity of death hath touched her so,
No dreams of life can reach her in such rest ;—
No dreams the mind exhausted here below,
Sleep built within the romance of her breast.
How she will sleep ! like musick quickening slow
Dark the dead germs, to golden life caressed.

Low musick, thin as winds that lyre the grass,
Smiting thro' red roots harpings ; and the sound
Of elfin revels when the wild dews glass
Globes of concentric beauty on the ground ;
For showery clouds o'er tepid nights that pass
The prayer in harebells and faint foxgloves crowned.

So, if she's dead, thou know'st she is not dead.
Disturb her not ; she lies so lost in sleep :
The too-contracted soul its shell hath fled :
Her presence drifts about us and the deep
Is yet unvoyaged and she smiles o'erhead :—
Weep not nor sigh—thou wouldest not have *her* weep ?

To principles of passion and of pride,
To trophied circumstance and specious law,
Stale saws of life, with scorn now flung aside,
From Mercy's throne and Justice wouldest thou draw
Her, Hope in Hope, and Chastity's pale bride,
In holiest love of holy, without flaw ?

The anguish of the living merciless,—
 Mad, bitter cruelty unto the grave,—
Wrings the dear dead with tenfold heart's distress,
 Earth chaining love, bound by the lips that rave.
If thou hast sorrow let thy sorrow bless
 That power of death, of death our selfless slave.

“Unjust?”—He is not! for hast thou not all,
 All that thou ever hadst when this dull clay
So heartless, blasted now, flushed spiritual,
 A restless vassal of Earth's night and day?
This hath been thine and is; the cosmic call
 Hath disenchanted that which might not stay.

Thou unjust!—bar not from its high estate,—
 Won with what toil thro' devastating cares:
What bootless battling with the violent Fate;
 What mailed endeavor with resistless years;—
That soul:—whole-hearted granted once thy mate,
 Heaven only loaned, return it not with tears!

THE THREE URGANDAS.

CAST on sleep there came to me
Three Urgandas ; and the sea
In lost lands of Briogne
Sounded moaning, moaning :
Cloudy clad in awful white ;
And each face a lucid light
Rayed and blossomed out of night,—
And a wind was groaning.

In my sleep I saw them rest,
Each a long hand at her breast,
A soft flame that lulls the West ;—
And the sea was moaning, moaning ;—
Hair like hoarded ingots rolled
Down white shoulders glossy gold,
Streaks of molten moonlight cold,—
And a wind was groaning.

Rosy 'round each high brow bent
Four-fold starry gold that sent
Barbs of fire redolent ;—
And the sea was moaning, moaning ;—
'Neath their burning crowns their eyes
Burned like southern stars the skies
Rock in shattered storm that flies,—
And a wind was groaning.

Wisdom's eyes of lurid dark;
And each red mouth like a spark
Flashed and laughed off care and cark,—
 And the sea was moaning, moaning;—
Mouths for song and lips to kiss;
Lips for hate and mouths to hiss;
Lips that fashioned hell or bliss,—
 And the wind was groaning.

Tall as stately virgins dead,
Tapers lit at feet and head,
'Round whom Latin prayers are said,—
 And the sea was moaning, moaning;—
Or as vampire women, who,
Buried beauties, rise and woo
Youths whose blood they suck like dew,—
 And a wind was groaning.

Then the west one said to me:
“Thou hast slept thus holily
While seven sands ran secretly.”—
 And the sea was moaning, moaning;—
“Earth hath served thee like a slave,
Serving us who found thee brave,
Fearless of or life or grave.”—
 And a wind was groaning.

“ Know !”—she smote my brow ; a pain,
 Riddling arrows, rent my brain,
 Ceased and earth fell, some vast strain ;—
 And the sea was moaning, moaning ;—
 Then I understood all thought ;
 What was life the spirit fraught ;
 Love and hate ; how worlds were wrought :—
 And a wind was groaning.

Then the east one said to me :
 “ Thou hast wandered wearily
 By what mist-enveloped sea !”—
 And the sea was moaning, moaning ;—
 “ Know the things thou hast not seen ;
 Life and law, and love and teen ;
 Things that be and have not been.”—
 And the wind was groaning.

“ See !” her voice sung like a lyre
 Throbs of thunderous desire ;
 Then the iron sight like fire—
 And the sea was moaning, moaning ;—
 Burst ; the inner eyelids, which
 Husked clairvoyance, with a twitch
 Rose—and I with light was rich ;—
 And a wind was groaning.

Then I saw the eyes of Sleep ;
 Nerves of Life and veins that leap ;
 Laws of entity ; the deep :—
 And the sea was moaning, moaning ;—
 Orbs and eons ; springs of Power ;
 Circumstance—blown like a flower ;—
 Time—the second of an hour :—
 And the wind was groaning.

To the central third one's full
 Balanced being beautiful
 Heart, to hearken, made a lull,—
 And the sea was moaning, moaning ;—
 As she sternly stooped to me :
 “Thou dost know and thou canst see ;
 What thou art arise and be!”—
 And the wind was groaning.

To my mouth hot lips she pressed ;
 And my famished soul, thrice blessed,
 Quaffed her radiance and caressed :—
 And vague seas were moaning, moaning :—
 Mounted ; star-vibrating fled ;
 Soared to love, with her who said :
 “Thou dost live and thou art dead.”—
 Far off winds were groaning.

THE BRUSH SPARROW.

I.

ERE wild haws, looming in the glooms,
Build bolted drifts of breezy blooms;
And in the whistling hollow there
The red-bud bends as brown and bare
As buxom Roxy's up-stripped arm;
From some slick hickory or larch,
Sighed o'er the sodden meads of March,
The sad heart thrills and reddens warm
To hear thee braving the rough storm,
Frail courier of green-gathering powers,—
Rebelling sap in trunks and flowers;
Love's minister come heralding;
O sweet saint-voice among bleak bowers!—
Thou brown-red pursuivant of Spring!

II.

“*Moan*” sob the woodland cascades still
Down bloomless ledges of the hill;
And gray, gaunt clouds like harpies hang

In harpy heavens, and swoop and clang
Sharp beaks and talons of the wind :
Black scowl the forests, and unkind
The far fields as the near ; while song
Seems murdered and all passion, wrong.
One wild frog only in the thaw
Of spawny pools wakes cold and raw,
Expires a melancholy bass
And stops as if bewildered ; then
Along the frowning wood again,
Flung in the thin wind's fangy face,
Thou, in red, woolly tassels proud
Of bannered maples, flutest loud :
“Her Grace ! her Grace ! her Grace !”

III.

“ Her Grace ! her Grace ! her Grace ! ”
Climbs beautiful and sunny-browed
Up, up the kindling hills and wakes
Blue berries in the berry brakes ;
With fragrant flakes, that blow and bleach,
Deep powders smothered quince and peach ;
Eyes dogwoods with a thousand eyes ;
Teaches each sod how to be wise
With twenty wild-flowers for one weed ;

And kisses germs that they may seed.
In purest purple and sweet white
Treads up the happier hills of light ;
Bloom, cloudy-borne, song in her hair,
Long dew-drops her pale fingers fair :
Big wind-retainers, and the rains
Her yeomen strong that flash the plains ;
While scarlet mists at dawn,—and gold
At eve,—her panoply enfold.—
Her herald tabarded behold !—
Awake to greet ! prepare to sing !
She comes, the darling Duchess, Spring !”

CHORDS.

I.

SLEEP while I sing to thee, Dulcinea,—
How like a shower of moonlight-crusted beams
Of textile form compact, whose veins run stars,—
Discovered goddess of what naked loves!—
Maiden of dreams and aromatic sleep,
Thou liest. Thy long instrument against
Thy god-voluptuous sensuousness of hip
Pure iridescent pearl of ocean slopes:
Tempestuous silent color-melodies
Pulse glimmering from it beaten by the moon,—
Soft songs the white hands of white shadows touch.—
Magnetic star set slumberous over night,
Watch with me this superior star of Earth
Good Heaven was kind to grant me: Trembler,
Like some soft bird, dream, while I sing to thee—
Dream, languid ardor, my Dulcinea, dream.

II.

FLOATS a wild chant of morning from the hills;
Bursts a broad song of sunlight on the sea;
High Heaven throbs strung with rays of chords and
Life's resonant pæans to Earth's minstrelsy. [thrills,
Bind thou swift sandals on of youth,
My love, and harp to me of truth
In lands of joy or ruth.

Now sheer o'er solitudes of noon the strife
Of chariot fierce by chariot scintillant
Flames, and the blade-bare charioteers for life,
O'er-bent, close-curled, goad their hot yokes that pant.
Haste not, my love, but from the beam
Beside this olive-frosty stream
Sing while I rest and dream.

What swart Penthesilea, Amazon,
Hath, smitten, hurled her shield, that crescent there;
To wrench the barbéd arrow leaned,—voiced one
Defiant shout, breathed her red life in air.—
Tho' life be close to sunset, lo,
Into the sunset let us go
Still lyring joy not woe.

How swims the Night thro' the deep-oceaned sky!

How at pale lips blown stars like bubbles break,
Burn, streamed from showery locks she tosses high!—

A stronger swimmer, Death, glares in her wake.—

Cast, love, ah cast thy harp away!

Aweary am I of thy lay—

Kneel down by me and pray.

III.

WHEN love delays, when love delays and Joy
Steals a strange shadow o'er the happy hills,
And Hope smiles from To-morrow, nor fulfills
One promise of To-day, thy sight would cloy
 This soul with loved despair
 By seeing thee so fair.

When love delays, when love delays and song
Aches at wild lips regretful, as the sound
Of a whole sea strives in the shell-mouth bound,
Tho' Hope smiles still to-morrowed, all this wrong
 Would, at one little word,
 Leap forth for thee a sword.

When love delays, when love delays and sleep
Nests in dark eyeballs, like a song of home
Heard 'mid familiar flowers o'er the foam,
Tho' Hope smiles still to-morrowed, thou wouldest steep
 This hurt heart overmuch
 In balm with one true touch.

When love delays, when love delays and Sorrow
Drinks her own tears that fever her soul's thirst,
And song, and sleep, and memory seem accurst,
For Hope smiles still to-morrow'd, I would borrow
One smile from thee to cheer
The weary, weary year.

When love delays, when love delays and Death [night,
Hath sealed dim lips and mocked young eyes with
To love or hate locked calm, indifferent quite,—
Hope's star-eyed acolyte,—what kisses' breath,
What joys can slay regret
Or teach thee to forget !

IV.

THOU hast not loved her, hast not as thou shouldst,
O narrow heart, that could not grasp so wide!
And tho' thy oaths seemed oaths yet they have lied,
And thy caresses, kisses were—denied—
Thou hast not loved her, hast not as thou couldst.

Thou hast not loved her, hast not as thou shouldst;
O shallow eyes, that could not image deep!—
Enough! what boots it tho' ye weep and weep?
Her sleep is deep, too deep! so let her sleep—
Thou hast not loved her, hast not as thou couldst.

Thou hast not loved her, hast not as thou shouldst;
For hadst thou, that confluent night and day
Had in oblivion currents borne away
Not one alone—but coward! thou didst stay—
Thou hast not loved her, hast not as thou couldst!

V.

O LIFE, thou hast no power left to strive,
 Life, who, upon wild mountains of Surprise,
 Behold'st Love's citadelled, tall towers rise,—
 Shafts of clear, Paphian waters poured that live.

O Hope, who sought'st fulfillment of deep dreams
 Beyond those Caucasus of Faith and Truth,—
 Twixt silver realms of eld and golden youth
 Rolled,—cloudward clustered; whose sonorous streams,

Urn'd in the palms of Death, gush to his feet :
 Unlovely beauty of sad, stirless sight
 Mixed in them with eternity of night ;—
 O Hope, how sad the journey once so sweet !

Dreams crowned with thorns have passed thee on the way;
 And Beauties with bare limbs red-bruised and torn ;
 Tall, holy Hours their eyes dull, wan and worn,
 Slaves manacled whom lashed the brutal Day.

And Sorrow sat beside a sea so wide,
 That shoreless Heaven unto one little star
 Upon the brink of night seems not so far,
 And on her feet the frail foams tossing sighed.

She, her rent hair, dressed like a siren's, full
Of weedy waifs and strays of moaning shells,
Streaked with the glimmering sands and foamy bells,
Loomed a pale utterance most beautiful.

“ And thou shalt love me, Sorrow ! ” I ; but she
Turned her vast eyes upon me and no more ;
Their melancholy language clove the core
Of my fast heart ; and in mine ears the sea
Along gaunt crags yearned iron-husky grief ;
Groaned the hard headlands with the wings of Storm,
Huge thunder shook the foot-hills and Alarm
Gnashed her thin fangs from hissing reef to reef.

So to the hills aweary I did turn.—
Beyond, a reach of sunlight and slim flowers ;
Where Hope, an amaranth, and tearless Hours,
Long lilies, lived, whose hearts stiff gold did burn.
And there curled Joy clinked their chaste chalices ;
Distilled at dusk, poured bubbling dewy wine,
Divine elixir ! off his lips divine
Tossed the fleet rapture to the golden lees,
And so lolled dazed with pleasure. And I said,
“ Yield me the lily thou hast drained that I
This hollow thirst may kill and so not die ? ”
To me he laughed, “ I yield it ! ”—but 'twas dead.

And each blown reach and eminence of blooms
Flushed long, low, gurgling murmurs like a sea,
And laughed bright lips that flashed white teeth of glee
In pearly flower on flower ; pure perfumes
Gasped the rolled fields ; and o'er the eminence
I journeyed joyless thro' a blossom-fire
That, budding kisses curled with blown desire,
Clasped me and claimed me tho' I spurned it hence.

Then came unto a land of thorns and weeds,
And dust and thirst o'er which a songless sky,
Hoarse with lean vultures, scowled a scoffing lie,
Where cold snakes hissed among dead, rattling reeds.

And there I saw the bony brow of Hate ;
Vile, vicious sneers, the eyes of shriveled Scorn
Among the writhing briars ; each a thorn
Of cavernous hunger barbed with burning fate.

They, thro' her face-drawn locks of raveled dark,
Stung a stark horror ; and I felt my heart
Freeze, wedged with ice, to dullness part by part,
And knew Hate coiled toward me yet stood stark—

Fell ; seeing on the happy, happy hills,
Above that den of dust and thorny thirst,
The bastioned walls of Love in glory burst,
Built by sweet glades of Poesy and rills.

O Life, I had not life enough to strive !

O Hope, I had not hope enough to dream !

Death drew me to him and to sigh did seem,

“ Love ? Love ?—thou canst not reach her and yet live !

“ For sorrow, joy, and hate, and scorn are bound

About thee, girdling so, thy lips are dumb ;

And Fame, ah Fame ! her towers are but a tomb—

Star-set on dwindling heights of starry ground.

“ And thou art done and being done must die,

Endeavor being dead and energy

Slain, a wild bird that beat bars to be free,

Despairing perished, finding life a lie.”

VI.

If thou wouldest know the Beautiful that breathes
Consanguined with young Earth, go seek!—but seek
No sighing Shadows with dead hemlock-wreaths,
No sleepy Sorrows whose wan eyes are weak
With vanished vigils, Melancholy made,
Forlorn, in lands of sin and saddening shade;
No tearful Angers torn of truthless Love,
Who stab their own hearts to dull daggers' hilts
For vengeance sweet; no miser Moods that fade
In owlet towers. Such it springs above,
And buds on morning meads no flower that wilts.

If thou dost seek the Beautiful, beware!
Lest thou discover her, nor know 'tis she;
And she enslave thee evermore, and there
Reward thee with but kingliest beggary:
Make thine the robust red her cheek that stings;
The kiss-sweet odor, thine, her wild breath brings;
Make thine the broad bloom of her crownéd brow;
The hearts of light that ardor her proud eyes;
That melody,—which is herself,—that sings
The poem of her presence and the vow,
That stars exalts and mortals deifies.

Lone art thou then, lone as the lone first star
Kindling pale beauty o'er the mournful wave;
Lost to all happiness save searching far
Thro' lands of Life where Death hath delved no grave:
Lost,—even as I,—a devotee to her,
Poor in world-blessedness her bliss to share,
But rich in passion.—For her hermitage
Hope no Hydaspes' splendor, for it lies
Mossy by woody waters hidden, where
She, priestess pure, wise o'er all Wisdom sage,
Shrines artists' hearts for godliest sacrifice.

VII.

I

THEN up the orient heights to the zenith that balanced a crescent,—
Up and far up and over,—a warm erubescence liquecent
Rioted roses and rubies; eruptions of opaline gems,
Flung and wide sown, blushed crushed, and crumbled
from diadems
Wealth of the kings of the Sylphs; whence, old alchemist, Earth—
Dewed down—by chemistry occult fashions petrified
waters of worth.—
Then out of the stain and rash furor, the passionate pul-
ver of stone,
The trembling suffusion that dazzled and awfully shone,
Chameleon-convulsion of color, hilarious ranges of
glare—
Like a god who for vengeance ires, nodding battle from
every hair,
Fares forth with majesty girdled and clangs with hot
heroes for life,
Till the brazen gates boom bursten hells and the walls.
roar bristling strife,—

Athwart with a stab of glittering fire, in-plunged like a knife,
Cut billowing gold, in bullion rolled, and an army driven,
Routed, the stars fled shriveled ; and the white moon riven,
Puffed,—like a foam-feather forth of a Triton's conch when sounded,—
Clung, vague as a web, on heaven ; then weak as a face that is wounded
Died on the withering clouds and sorrowed with them and mingled.
While up and up with a steadiness and triumph of sparkle that tingled,
Wrestled the tempest of Dawn, that hurricaned heaven with spangle,
And halcyon bloom like mercy,—a shatter, a scatter, a tangle
Of labyrinthed glory.—O God ! with manifold mirth
The hallelujah of Heaven, hosanna of Earth.

2.

And I in my vision imprisoned was restless and wan
With a yearning for vigor to gird and be gone
Out of false dreams to the true—realities noble of dawn.

VIII.

I

VANISHING visions, whose lineaments steal into slumbers,
 Loosened the lids of the sight the night that encumbers ;
 Secretly, sweetly with fingers of fog that were slow,
 Slow as a song that mysterious
 Passions the soul, till delirious,
 Wrapped in mad melody mastering the uttermost woe,
 Deep to the innermost deep it is shaken
 Ruffled and rippled and tossed,
 Tantalized, terrorized, cursed with a thirst that, unslaken,
 Debauches with eyes that burn stolid, yet only shall waken
 With infinite scorn of the cost
 If no note of the rhapsody's lost.

2.

Oh, for the music of moonbeams that master and sweep
 Chords of the resonant deep !
 Smiting loud lyres of Night, sonorous as fire,
 Leap fluttering fingers of vanquishing flash and of flake
 Fain at each firmament-universe-instrument star-strung.
 Vibrating-vestured in garments of woven desire,

Stoop to me, breathe on me, smile on me, waver, "Awake!
From waking to sleeping, to silence from manifold clamor,
To revelous regions of multiform glamour!"

Murmur and whisper "Awake!"

Oh, necromance banquets by fountains of fairy, the spar-sprung!

Oh, sorcerous beauties and wonders of wizards! oh take

The millions of morning-spun gleams,

All glitters of galloping streams,

The glimmer the gasp the clutch and the grasp,

That colorless crystals and virtuous jewels

As spasmodic fuels

Cuddle and huddle and clasp:

The wrinkle and crinkle of scintillant heat in white metals;

The quiver of terrible gold and the pearly

Lithe brilliance of soft, holy petals,

Of slender, sad blossoms, tumultuous tossed crispy and curly

In shadowy reaches of violet dark;

The burn of the stars and the spark

Fragile of foams that are fluted, to make

One cordial of dreams

To drink and to sink

Deep, deep into dreams nor awake.

IX

I

AS to a Nymph in the ripple-ribbed body of ocean,
Down, down thro' vast stories of water, a hiss and de-
Electrify altitudes orbed,—pulses violent motion [vour
Of Thunder, who treads the brute neck of the seas in
his power,
Till their spine writhes lumped into waves,—the Nymph
in her bower,
Rubbing moist sleep from her eyes, arises,—
Loosens the loops of her locks,
Loosens, and suddenly darts on the storm and surprises
The boisterous bands of the rocks,
That hoot to the the riddling arrows of rain and of seas,
Mountainous these ;—
Swirling and whirling,
She of the huge exultation beheld, with long tresses,
Dotted with bells of the hollow, hard foam, flung stream-
ing,
Dives, bounds to the whirlwind embracing ; then mock-
ingly presses
Hair to wild face and wild throat, drifts desolate dream-
ing ;

With scorn then laughing and screaming,
Discovers full beauty of nakedness leaping and gleam-
ing;
And showering the rain from her hair,
Pouts blown, curdled foam from her lips,
 And eddying slips,
From the ravenous eyes of the Thunder that glare,
 Away, away,
To the arms of her lover the Spray.

 So I,—
At swift thoughts that were spoken, that came
As if winds had fashioned a speech—was a flame
That dwindled, was kindled, then mounted and,
 Marvelling why,—
Stemming all thought, a gleam out of gleams
 Was born into dreams.

2.

Beautiful-bosomed, O Night! with thy moon,
Move in majesty slowly to majesty lightly!
Silent as sleep, who is lulled by a delicate tune,
O'er-stroke thou the air with a languor of moonlight
 brightly!
Thin ice, in sockets of turquoise fastened, the stars
Gash golden the bosom of heaven with fiery scars.

Swoon down, O shadowy hosts,
O multitude ghosts,
Of the moonlight and starlight begotten!—Then swept
Whispers that sighed to me, sorrows that stealthily hov-
ered,
Laughters with lips that were mist. And murmurings
crept
On toward me feet that were glow; and faces uncovered,
 Radiant and crystalline clear,
In tortuous, sinuous swirl of vapory pearl,
 Waned near and more near.
Flashed faster a spiral of shapes and of shadows still
faster,
On in a whirl of unutterable beauties by music expired,
 That lived and desired,—
Born births of the brain of a rhapsody-reveling master;
 And mine eyes, with their beauties infired,
Smiled scorn on dark Death and Disaster.

X.

"A H! now the orchard's leaves are sear,
Drip not with starlight-litten dew;
Green-drowned no moon-bright fruit hangs here;
Dead, dead your long, white lilies too—
And you, Allita, where are you!"

Then comes her dim touch, faintly warm;
Cool hair sense on my feverish cheek;
Dim eyes at mine deep with some charm,—
So gray! so gray! and I am weak
Weak with wild tears and can not speak.

I am as one who walks with dreams:
Sees as in youth his father's home;
Hears from his native mountain-streams
Far music of continual foam.

DEAD AND GONE.

I.

I WOT well o' his going
To think in flowers fair ;—
His a right kind heart, my dear,
To give the grass such hair.

II.

I wot well o' his lying
Such nights out in the cold,—
To list the cricket's crick, my sweet,
To see the glow-worm's gold.

III.

An mine eyes be laughterful,
Well may they laugh, I trow,—
Since two dead eyes a yesternight
Gazed in them sad enow.

IV.

An my heart make moan and ache,
Well may it dree, I'm sure ;—
He is dead and gone, my love,
And it is beggar poor.

A MABINOGI.

IN samite sark yclad was she;
And that fair glimmerish band of gold
Which crowned long, savage locks of hair
In the moon brent cold.

She with big eyeballs gloomed and glowered,
And lightly hummed some Elfin's song,
And one could naught save on her stare
And fare along.

Yea; sad and lute-like was that song
And softly said its mystery;
Which quaintly sang in elden verse
“Thy love I'll be.”

And oft it said: “I love thee true,
Sir Ewain, champion of the fair.”
And never wist he what a witch
Was that one there.

And never wist he that a witch
Had bound him with her wily hair,
Eke with dark art had ta'en his heart
To slay him there.

And all his soul did wax amort
To stars, to hills, to slades, to streams,
And it but held that sorceress fair
As one of dreams.

And now he kens some castle gray
Wild turrets ivied, in the moon,
Old, where through woodlands foaming on
A torrent shone. . . .

In its high hall full twenty knights
With visors barred all sternly stand;
The following of some gracious brave,
Lord of the land.

And lo ! when that dim damosel
Moved down the hall, they louted low ;
And she was queen of all that band,
That dame of snow.

Now on that knight she stared eftsoons,
And cried on high unto her crew,
“Behold ! Sir Knights, the dastard brave
Your king that slew.”

And all those heathen knights wox wild
Attonce ; and all against him drove ;
Long battle blades and daggers bright
Aloft did wave.

The press on him puissant bare
And smote him to the rush-strown earth ;—
Tall, tall o'er all that Fairy rose
Aloud with mirth.

GENIUS LOCI.

I.

WHAT deity for dozing laziness
Devised the lounging coziness of this
Enchanted nook?—and how!—did I distress
His musing ease that fled but now, or his
Laughed frolic with some forest-sister, fair
As those wild hill-carnations are and rare?
Too true, alas!—Feel! the wild moss is warm
And moist with late reclining, as the palm
Of what hot Hamadryad, who, a-nap,
Props her hale cheek upon it, while her arm
Weak wind-flowers bury; in her hair the balm
Of a whole Spring of blossoms and of sap?

II.

See, how the dented moss, that pads the hump
Of these distorted roots, elastic springs
From that god's late departure; lump by lump,
Pale tufts impressed twitch loose in nervous rings,
As crowding stars qualm thro' gray evening skies.
Indulgence grant thou my profane surprise,

Pray!—then to dream where thou didst dream before,
Benevolent! . . . here where the veiny leaves
Bask broad the fuzzy bosoms of their hands
O'er wistful waters: 'neath this sycamore,
Smooth, giraffe-brindled, where each ripple weaves
A twinkling quiver as of marching bands

III.

Of Elfin chivalry, that, helmed with gold,
Split spilled the scaley sunbeams wrinkled off.
What brought thee here?—This wind that steals the old
Weird legends from the forests, with a scoff
To laugh them thro' their beards? Or, in those weeds,
The hermit brook so busy with his beads?—
How many *Aves, Paters* doth he say
In one droned minute on his rosary
Of bubbles—wot'st thou? —Pucker-eyed didst mark
Yon lank hag-tapers, yellow by yon way,
A haggard company of seven?—See
How dry swim by such curled brown bits of bark?

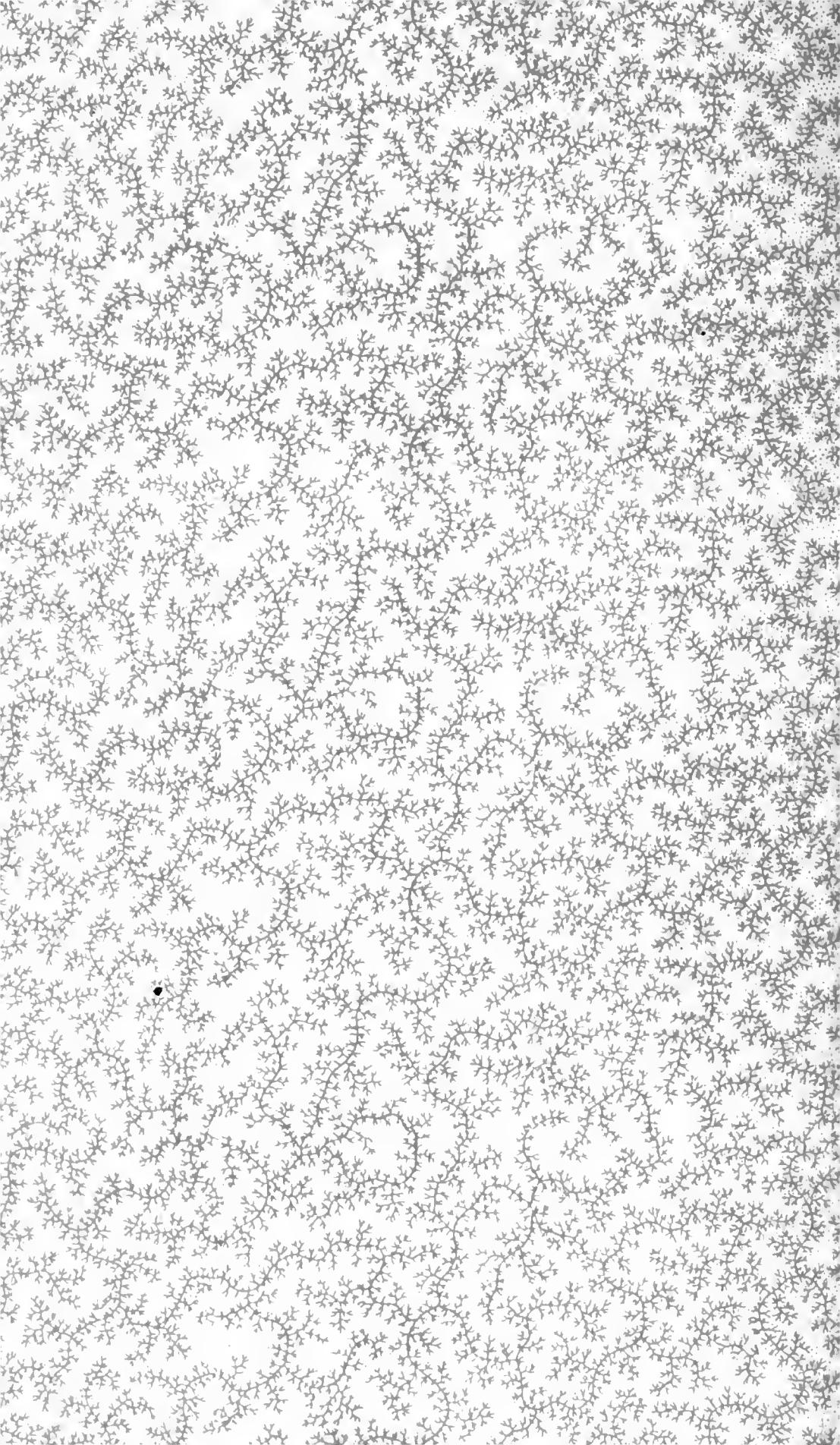
IV.

Didst mark the ghostly gold of this grave, still,
Conceited minnow thro' these twisted roots,
Thrust o'er the smoky topaz of this rill,
Dull-slumbering here? Or did those insect flutes—

Sleepy with sunshine—buzz thee that forlorn
Tale of Tithonus and the bashful Morn?
Until two tears gleamed in the stealing stream
Trembling its polish o'er the winking grail?—
Nay! didst perplex thee with some poet plan
To drug this air with beauty to make dream,—
Ah, discreet Cunning, watching in yon vale!—
Me, wildwood-wandered from the marts of Man!







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